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THE  
C A T E C H I S T :

O R,  
AN INQUIRY INTO  
THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES,  
CONCERNING THE  
ONLY TRUE GOD,  
AND OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

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By THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, A. M.

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— *Instead of receiving the word of God, they set themselves against it, without alleging any other excuse than the length of time wherein they have continued in their errors; as if there were any prescription of time against HIM, who made the world and ages, and to whom all things are present.*

Brandt's Hist. of the Reform. in the Low-Countries, Anno 1565, vol. 1. p. 159.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

It is for the most part taken for granted, in these INQUIRIES, that there is sufficient satisfactory evidence for the facts related in the Old and New Testament. Of the latter, Dr. Lardner's great work, "The Credibility of the Gospel History," and his "Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion," will enable those to judge, who have not leisure or learning to consult ancient authors for themselves. And the divine revelations recorded in the books of the Old Testament, and the facts connected with them, besides their own independent evidence, on which they stand, have great additional weight, and full confirmation given them, to the christian, by their having been seriously believed and received by Jesus and his apostles, who continually refer and appeal to these books, and to the divine authority of Moses and the prophets.

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THE  
P R E F A C E.

*A great departure from the truth among Christ's followers. The design of this work. The use and importance of the Scriptures. The doctrine of the Divine Unity clearly and plainly revealed in them. Mistakes of Mr. Gibbon concerning the Introduction to St. John's gospel. A principal object of Mr. Gibbon's history.*

*To the CHRISTIAN READER.*

ALMOST 1800 years are past since Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, received a divine commission, and by the powers intrusted (a) with

(a) It was after prayer to God for his direction and assistance, that Jesus chose his 12 disciples. Luke vi. 12, 13. Acts i. 2. This last should be translated *after he had given commandment to the apostles, whom he had chosen by the holy Spirit.* See Dr. Benson's History, &c. of the christian religion, vol. 1. p. 13. 14.) Upon this passage Bp. Pearce has this honest note; for he never had any reserves in speaking what appeared to him to be the truth. "Jesus is every where almost represented as acting and speaking by the

with him imparted the same to certain men (*a*) his apostles to teach the knowledge of *the only* (*b*) *true God, the Father*, and the way to eternal life. These apostles and messengers of the most high God were laborious in fulfilling their great trust, by their travels and preaching in most parts of the then known world, and by their writings which they left

the spirit of God, which (as John says, in ch. iii. 34.) *was not given by measure unto him.*" One wonders the good Bishop should stop here, and not see, that he could be none other but a creature who was thus under the continual guidance of God.

(*a*) John xvii. 18. *As thou (O Father,) has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* Observe here, that in our Saviour's account, and by his own interpretation, *to be sent into the world* does not signify coming immediately from God and another world, into this; but it signifies the receiving of a divine commission as a prophet or teacher; and nothing more. For Christ applies here the same phrase of *being sent into the world*, to his chosen disciples, as to himself.

(*b*) — xvii. 1, 3. *O Father! this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent; or to know, Jesus whom Thou hast sent, to be the Christ; or ἀπεργάζας, Ἰησοῦν, Χριστόν* as this last clause may more justly be translated.

The following remark of our countryman Mr. John Biddle, M.A. of the university of Oxford, a person  
of



left behind them, and which still remain; and great success attended their labours. But the doctrine of the Divine Unity began to be corrupted very soon by heathen inventions: and the greater part of christians have now for many ages acknowledged and worshiped two other persons as gods equal to the Father, who is God alone blessed for ever; by which Jews, Mahometans, and serious

B 2

Deists

of eminent learning and piety, written 140 years ago, merits more attention than hath hitherto been paid it, as do all his valuable works: "Though *Luther* and *Calvin*, saith he, deserve much praise for the pains they took in cleansing our religion from sundry idolatrous pollutions of the roman Antichrist, yet are the dregs still left behind: I mean the gross opinion touching *three persons in one God*. Which error not only made way for those pollutions, but lying at the bottom, corrupteth almost our whole religion. For first, it introduceth *three Gods*, and so subverteth the *Unity of God*, so frequently inculcated in the scripture. Neither is it enough for the salving this absurdity, to say with *Athanasius*, that *though the Father be God, the Son God, and the holy Spirit God; yet there are not three Gods but one God*. For who is there, if at least he dare make use of reason in his religion, who seeth not that this is as ridiculous, as if one should say, *Peter is an apostle, James an apostle, John an apostle; yet there are not three apostles, but one apostle, &c.*"

A Confession of Faith touching the Holy Trinity. Preface. London, 1648.

Deists have been rendered averse to the gospel, and its first divine teachers discredited, as if they either did not understand this prime capital article of all true religion, or did not express themselves clearly and properly about it.

This little book, Reader, proposeth to remove this unjust aspersions thrown upon the gospel; and to shew, by plain and easy deductions from the scriptures, that Jesus and his apostles knew no other God, but the Father; and also, that they never taught that there was any other Being or Person, to whom we were to offer up our prayers, but this heavenly Father of Jesus, and of us all. And it cannot but be desireable for us, to be assured, upon the best grounds, who is the God that made us, and to whom we are to direct our prayers.

Errors so deeply rooted and of such long standing, as those which are here opposed, cannot be expected to be relinquished all at once. But upon the young and unprejudiced, it may be hoped that the plain arguments of scripture, and strong repeated declarations of Christ and his apostles, will not be wholly lost.

If then, by what is here delivered from the authority of the acknowledged word of God, you shall perceive and learn, that you have been hitherto all your life worshipping those that are no gods, and who cannot hear, or help you: the use that you are bound to make of it is, henceforth to worship  
and

and pray to God, the Father only, in your public as well as private devotions; and to render to the blessed Jesus, all the reverence, love, and honour, due to him, and especially that obedience to the precepts of the gospel, which he (*a*) required from all his followers: but at the same time to remember, that piety and virtue are above all knowledge; and that it is not so much by our zeal for any doctrines, however important, as by our love to (*b*) our brethren of mankind, that we are to approve ourselves Christ's true disciples.

It is an advantage not sufficiently valued, which we reap from the sacred writings, that we are therein assured, by indubitable divine authority, that there is a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness at the head of all things, who claims the devout homage, love, and confidence of his creatures.

For want of such written authentic monuments of this great truth as are contained in *the Bible*, we see in what darkness and ignorance the different nations of the earth were involved in antient times. If some few individuals amongst them were more

B 3 enlightened,

(*a*) John xiv. 15. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* N.B. He never commanded men to worship himself.

(*b*) *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* John xiii. 35;

enlightened, (as to the rational inquiring (*a*) mind the existence of a first cause of all things wise and good is legible in the *great Bible of the universe* in the brightest characters;) their knowledge was of little service to others. They themselves joined and encouraged the people in the worship of their false gods, whom they derided in private among their select friends; but had not the virtue or courage to speak aloud.

In our own times, among those who reject the scriptures, we rarely meet with any practical regards towards God, or worship of Him. Some are found to entertain gloomy doubts of the existence of a creating and governing Mind; whilst others, beset with dark and narrow prejudices, take upon them to call in question the goodness of the benevolent

(*a*) "The plain argument for the existence of the Deity obvious to all, and carrying irresistible conviction with it, arises from the evident contrivance and fitness of things for one another, which we meet with throughout all the parts of the universe. There is no need of nice or subtle reasonings in this matter: a manifest contrivance immediately suggests a contriver. The admirable and beautiful structure of things for final causes exalts our idea of the *Contriver*: the unity of the design shews him to be *One*." &c. - *Maclaurin's Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries*, 8vo, p. 400.



lent Parent of all, and will not allow the world to be so well made, or its inhabitants so happy as they ought to be.

That there should have been and subsisted, even among christians, so long, such a strange confused misconception concerning the Deity, that HE is not one Person, one single intelligent Agent, but three Persons, three intelligent Agents : has not been owing to Divine Revelation, or to any obscurity or hesitation in it about this point. For that there is one all-perfect Being, the father, creator, governor and preserver of the universe, is not a point so difficult of comprehension, but that the commonest understanding might see and retain it, when made known, as it is made known in the books of Moses and the hebrew prophets. This is apparent in fact from the history of the Israelites, to whom this knowledge of the *Divine Unity* was revealed by God himself, and who have ever since adhered to it. Even in their temporary deviations into the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, it is allowed that they still retained the sole supremacy of Jehovah. But since their return from the Babylonian captivity, for more than two thousand years, they have never departed from the *Unitarian doctrine*, which Moses their divine lawgiver delivered to them : and from him Mahomet borrowed it. So that it is from this original divine revelation, that the Mahometans in Europe, and all over the east, are *Unitarians*, be-  
lievers

lievers in; and worshipers of the one only true God, and creator of all things.

Nor would there have been so early and lasting a defection from the knowledge and worship of the one true God, the Father, among christians, who, together with their own receive also the hebrew scriptures as of divine authority, if philosophy had not at a very early period obtruded upon them its vain dreams and fanciful speculations concerning the nature of the First Cause of all things and the manner of his operations, and thereby given birth to those twofold and threefold divisions of the Deity, borrowed from the eastern sages and from Plato: which in no small time darkened and nearly extinguished the scriptural doctrine of the unity of God; and brought into the church the direct polytheism of three Persons, three distinct and equal Gods; and from the same impure heathen source were derived that multitude of inferior deities, called saints, dead men and women, male and female, whose worship is kept up in many christian countries, even to this day.

It is by availing himself of the weakness and prejudices of these first christians and followers of Plato, that Mr. Gibbon endeavours to demolish the whole fabric of the gospel at once, in the second volume of his "History of the decline and fall of the Roman empire." After having touched with no ordinary hand the character of this father of the Academy

Academy and the stile of his philosophy concerning the Deity, and shewn how he lost himself by diving too deep into the unfathomable mysteries of the divine essence; he thus proceeds:

“The theology of Plato (vol. ii. p. 240.) might have been for ever confounded with the philosophical visions of the Academy, the Porch, and the Lycæum, if the name and divine attributes of the *Logos* had not been confirmed by the celestial pen of the last and most sublime of the evangelists. The christian revelation, which was consummated under the reign of Nerva, disclosed to the world the amazing secret, that the *Logos*, who was with God from the beginning, and was God, who had made all things, and for whom all things had been made, was incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; who had been born of a virgin, and suffered death on the cross.”

Lest it should not be sufficiently attended to, that Plato, as our author soon after expresses himself, p. 242. “had marvellously anticipated one of the most surprising discoveries of the christian revelation,” he is diligent to mark it also in the margin of his work, that it may take the eye of the most cursory reader. For, from p. 237 to 240, you trace as follows; “The system of Plato before Christ 360. “The *Logos* taught in the school of Alexandria before Christ 300.” (copied by a Jew into one of their apocryphal books called the Wisdom

dom of Solomon) "Before Christ 100. "Revealed "by the apostle John, A. D. 97." So that according to this notation and computation of Mr. Gibbon, the principal secret of the gospel was known to and published by the Athenian philosopher exactly 457 years before it was revealed by St. John, and therefore any extraordinary interposition from heaven in favour of it might well have been spared.

But we shall easily get clear of these consequences in which Mr. Gibbon would involve us, if it can be made to appear, that St. John is very far from teaching any thing like Plato's doctrine in the beginning of his gospel; that he therein makes no new discoveries, nor advances any thing different from what is found in the other evangelists and apostles who wrote before him; and moreover that the date of his gospel is probably much mistaken by our historian.

It must be owned that some of the early Fathers, as they are called, who were Plato-  
*St. John bor- rows nothing from Plato.* nists, and other christian writers since, who have copied after them, have given into the notion, in which Mr. Gibbon triumphs so much, that the *Word, Logos*, in the beginning of the gospel of St. John, is Plato's *Logos*, a second god of his invention. But the disciple of Moses and favourite of Jesus could never promulgate any such polytheistical doctrine; and if he wrote



wrote upon the subject must directly confute it, as he really has done in this very place.

For in truth, the apostle John makes no new revelation here of any thing discovered particularly to himself, tells nothing but what had always been professed and taught by the other apostles, nothing but what the meanest christian, who knew any thing of his religion, was from the first acquainted with. In short, the whole secret of this prefatory part of his work is, to declare in general the divine origin of the gospel; that by the mighty *Word*, or *Wisdom* of God (which is the same as God himself) all things whatsoever were made: that from this *Word* or *Wisdom* of God came all the *light* or knowledge of the way to the divine favour and future happiness, that had been at various times communicated to mankind; but above all that which was revealed by Jesus Christ: in whom this *Word* or *Wisdom* of God dwelt, that is, displayed itself in the most eminent manner, for the benefit and instruction of mankind. I trust, that in some few of the following pages, this is proved to be the design of the apostle so directly and evidently from the sacred writings, which are their own best interpreters, that I should hope we may lay aside Plato's doctrine for the future, and clear our apostle from the aspersions of being a plagiarist, and stealing the chief mystery of his gospel from that philosopher.

Our

Our historian follows many ancient and modern Divines, when he asserts that St. John <sup>Of the true date of St. John's gospel.</sup> wrote his gospel so late as the reign of Nerva, A. D. 97. But this has been a point by no means universally acceded to by christian critics. To name no other, Dr. Lardner, with that discernment, caution, and integrity that distinguish the true critic, and with all the learning and information necessary on the subject, has evinced the high probability of St. John having pen'd his gospel a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, about *thirty years* before the date which Mr. Gibbon ascribes to it. And few, I should suppose, will be of a contrary sentiment, who will take the trouble to examine his arguments.

Christian writers who maintain that St. John, in the preface to his gospel, teaches a different doctrine from the other evangelists and apostles, and that a doctrine of the first importance, do not attend to the difficulties in which they entangle themselves, and which Mr. Gibbon is not studious to diminish. For it would then follow that the chief doctrine of the gospel was not revealed till all its divinely authorised preachers save one was dead : for we have no ground to think any of them but St. John were alive A. D. 97 ; which would make the other apostles to have preached all their lives without knowing, or at least without revealing the most important part of

of the gospel. But the contrary has been just now shewn, that St. John differs not in any point of revealed doctrine from the other writers of the New Testament.

It is not difficult for an attentive peruser of Mr. Gibbon's work to perceive, that the main design he has in view is to sink the credit of the Divine Revelation, which we believe to be comprized in the books of the Old and New Testament. And surely if he thinks its miraculous histories to be fabulous, as he seems to do, no one can blame him; he is rather to be commended for trying to expose them to that neglect and contempt which in that case they would well deserve. Real christianity can never suffer from such inquiries; as it loves and invites fair discussion. But it seems to be not quite so ingenuous and candid, as it may deceive and put unwary readers off their guard, that our historian should personate the real christian at the very time that he is undermining the system. For, in the first volume of his History, p. 450. when he begins more particularly to treat of what relates to christians, he makes this opening; "Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing

*“vincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the  
“ruling providence of its great Author.”* It is not  
easy to imagine that the writer of this paragraph  
should be any other than a sincere believer of the  
gospel. And yet in the very next sentence, he  
begins a long disquisition, the most laboured part  
of his work, in which he strives to prove that the  
christian religion might grow up and become esta-  
blished in the world, in the degree and to the ex-  
tent it has been, by natural means, without any  
extraordinary interposition in its favour: from  
which it would follow, that the gospel is the mere  
creature and effect of human policy and contrivance.  
In this attempt Mr. Gibbon exerts his whole  
strength, which is not small or contemptible; calls  
in the aid of all the ancient and modern enemies to  
the christian name; but most avails himself of the  
ignorance, follies, and indiscretions of its injudi-  
cious friends, labouring at the same to destroy the  
foundation of the jewish as well as the christian  
revelation: for he well discerns that they must both  
stand or fall together.

In his second volume, where he resumes his ac-  
count of christianity, in descanting on the first  
christian emperor's inducements to embrace it, he  
thus expresses himself, p. 186. “The partial and  
“increasing favour of Constantine may naturally  
“be referred to the esteem he entertained for the  
“moral character of the christians; and to a per-  
“suasion



“ fuaion that the propagation of the gospel would  
 “ increafe the practice of private and public vir-  
 “ tue.” And a little lower—“ A prudent magi-  
 “ strate might obferve with pleafure the progress  
 “ of a religion which diffufed among the people a  
 “ pure, benevolent, and univerfal fyftem of ethics,  
 “ adapted to every duty, and every condition of  
 “ life, recommended as the will and reafon of the  
 “ Supreme Deity, and enforced by the fanktion of  
 “ eternal rewards and punifhments.” An ordinary  
 unfufpecting reader would conclude from this high  
 panegyric, that Mr. Gibbon held the christian re-  
 ligion to be the greateft bleffing to mankind.  
 Nevertheless it is instantly followed by a ftudied  
 picture and representation of it which is quite the  
 reverse, and which continues to be exhibited  
 throughout his whole work, when any thing re-  
 fpecting christians and their religion comes before  
 him. The principles and practice of thofe very  
 corrupt times of Conftantine, when inftead of the  
 world coming over to the church, the church was  
 brought over and converted to the world; are  
 gravely related as the genuine effects of the gospel.  
 One would imagine from our author’s defcription,  
 that *Pandora’s* box was opened again, and all kinds  
 of evils and mifchiefs and irreconcilable enmities  
 had iffued out of it, and infected the earth, when  
 christianity came into it. But abatements will be  
 made by the intelligent reader where there is fo

visible a bias one way, and the judgment perverted as an author's necessarily must be by looking only on the dark side of things. And besides, history has to do only with the most striking events, and the most forward active characters, which are not always the best; and our historian would not be likely to go out of his road to describe the silent unnoticed effects of the gospel, in the private walks of life, in promoting virtue and happiness, which have always distinguished it with advantage from heathenism in all times, and at its worst periods.

Wit and irony on serious subjects may please thoughtless uninquiring minds; but the truth of Divine revelation rests on too solid a foundation to be shaken by such efforts. So strong is the direct and positive evidence for the gospel, that it can be overlooked and resisted only by a total indolence, invincible prejudice, or an universal scepticism: diseases these alas! too common in our days, but for which the most palpable demonstration is no cure. Mr. Gibbon exhibits a singular phenomenon in his own person as a writer; viz. a grave professed historian, whose character should be that of the most perfect impartiality, wearing a mask, and dissembling his real sentiments, that he may have the better opportunity to put on his own colouring, whenever he has occasion to treat of christians and their religion. This is a circumstance which in any other case would create a suspicion of disingenuous

genuous dealing and the undue prejudices of a party. We may venture however to pronounce, that christianity will owe great obligations to our ingenious author, though it was much beside his intention to serve it. For from the attention to the subject which has been excited by his writings, and the replies already given to some of the difficulties started by him, it is easy to see that the divine truth of the gospel will be promoted by the objections he has made to it, as it has been by all that have been made, from Celsus's (*a*) time down to our own. And I am persuaded all of them will be found equally void of reason as his insinuation which gave occasion to these remarks; viz. that the chief doctrine of St. John's gospel and of the christian revelation is nothing more than a borrowed fragment of Plato's philosophy.

(*a*) This able and acute adversary of christianity flourished not more than 70 years after the death of St. John. Whoever will take the trouble to see the proofs that he has furnished in its defence whilst opposing it, as they are admirably deduced and drawn out by Dr. Lardner, ("Heathen and Jewish Testimonies, &c." vol. ii. ch. 18.) will at the same time see the fallacy and untruth of many things advanced against it by Mr. Gibbon.

END OF THE PREFACE.





**T H E**  
**C A T E C H I S T :**

**OR, AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE OF  
THE SCRIPTURES, CONCERNING THE ONLY  
TRUE GOD.**

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**I N Q U I R Y**

*Concerning Jesus Christ, and his authority as a Divine  
Teacher.*

**I** Have often been desirous of meeting you at some  
such convenient season of leisure as the present,  
said Eusebes to Artemon, that I might have the  
benefit of your friendly assistance in coming to a  
full and final determination of mind concerning the  
God whom we christians profess to worship. For  
I have been long dissatisfied with many things  
taught me in my youth upon the subject, which  
are made a part of belief necessary to salvation in  
the christian society of which I am a member, and  
much of the public worship of the congregation  
grounded upon them. I find no sufficient founda-  
tion

tion in the scriptures for such opinions and practice, yet am unable to confute some of those arguments which are brought for their support. And though I have taken some pains in studying those sacred records, as becometh every one, I know you to have been more conversant in them, and with greater advantages and abilities: I therefore desire you will give me leave to propose my questions and difficulties to you, and to bear with me, though I should sometimes appear too minute and tedious.

I cannot but approve your design, replied Artemon to Eusebes; and shall be happy to give you any assistance in my power to forward it. For it must be a most anxious state to a good mind to fluctuate in uncertainty about such an important point in morals and religion. And next to the care of doing nothing contrary to conscience, or the inward sense and judgment of our own minds, according to the knowlege we already have; you cannot be employed on a subject more necessary or useful, than in searching the scriptures to know the first great cause and author of all things, on whom we absolutely depend for ever. Right or wrong opinions of the Deity unavoidably influence and form our temper and conduct, and consequently our happiness. And it is the duty of all to review the principles and opinions instilled into them in their tender age, by the authority of those to whose care they were intrusted by divine providence, that they

they may not remain always children : and every religious opinion and practice is to be brought to the test (a) of God's word, and to be retained or rejected as found to accord or disagree with it.

*Eusebes.* With your leave then, said Eusebes, I shall enter upon my task. And because Jesus Christ is held forth as God, even the most high God, in the church I belong to; and so far as I am acquainted, in all the public national churches of the world: that I may attain full satisfaction, who he was, and what was his true character, and that our inquiry may proceed in some order, I shall desire you to inform me, first of all; how we may be assured that there was such a person as (b) Jesus Christ, who was born 1780 years ago, at Bethlehem in Judea; but

(a) "The authority of Emperors, Kings, and Princes, is human. The authority of Councils, Synods, Bishops, and Presbyters, is human. The authority of the Prophets is divine and comprehending the sum of religion, reckoning Moses and the Apostles among the Prophets; and if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, than what they have delivered, let him be anathema:" i. e. publicly disowned by the christian society. Gal. i. 8.

Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel. p. 14.

(b) *Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* Ephes. ii. 8.

but was bred up and had his chief abode at Nazareth in Galilee?

*Artemon.* It is in the same way that we know that there were such men as Cicero, and Julius Cæsar, who lived a little before that period; namely, from the history and accounts given by persons of veracity, who lived and conversed with Jesus, and wrote from their own knowledge concerning him; whose writings have been preserved and faithfully handed down from that time to the present.

*Eusebes.* Do any heathen writers, I pray, make mention of Christ, and of the time in which he lived?

*Artemon.* To mention no others, Tacitus, a roman historian of rank, and in deserved esteem, who lived near the time, after speaking of the wanton burning of Rome by the emperor Nero, and his endeavours to screen himself from the infamy of it, by unjustly accusing the christians, and condemning great numbers of them to the most cruel sufferings for it; takes the opportunity, in that part of his history, to inform his readers, that “these christians (a) had their name from Christ, who was put to death as a malefactor, in the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea.” This historian

(a) Auctor nominis ejus CHRISTUS, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum, supplicio affectus erat. Annal. l. xv. c. 44.



historian speaks in general terms of the crimes of the christians, and particularly of their hostile enmity to all mankind. But this language, in the mouth of a heathen idolater, such as he was, meant nothing more than the christians contempt of their false Gods, and neglect of their worship.

*Eusebes.* I beg to know, what evidence we have, that this same Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher with authority from God?

*Artemon.* This was evinced, 1st, by the miracles which he wrought, and which he alleged as a proof of his being sent in that character from God: *Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him; how long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.* John x. 24, 25. *Nicodemus said unto Jesus; Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.* iii. 2.

And 2dly. by the prophecies fulfilled in his person: *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?* v. 46, 47.

*Eusebes.* But where lies our obligation, to obey this divine teacher?

*Artemon.* Jesus continually declared that he came and acted by the authority of God, and that all mankind

mankind were to attend to and obey him. His discourses with the Jews, recorded by the evangelist St. John, particularly abound with his sayings of this kind. Also at the baptism of Jesus, and upon another solemn occasion afterwards, Almighty God, by a voice from heaven proclaimed; "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.*" Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5. And the apostle Peter brings this divine command to hear Jesus home to us, who are of the gentiles, in his second epistle, written to gentile christians, where he says; *We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God, the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory; this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the mount.* 2 Peter. i. 16, 17, 18.

## INQUIRY II.

*Whether Jesus Christ taught the same God as Moses.*

*Eusebes.* I SHOULD be glad to know if Christ instructed the people of the Jews, to whom he was immediately sent, in the knowlege of the one true God?

*Artemon.* No: he never set himself expressly to do this: but as they had been taught it by Moses their

their divine lawgiver before him, he contented himself with referring them to him. (a)

*Eusebes.* In what manner then I pray, did Moses teach this important doctrine?

*Artemon.* The first commandment which God gave to the Israelites by him, is in these terms: (Exod. xx, 2, 3.) *I am the LORD thy God—thou shalt have no other Gods before ME*, or, in my presence. Whoever allows himself one moment's impartial reflection, will see, that every other person, but that one person who here speaks, is excluded from being God, and forbidden absolutely to be acknowledged as such: for the pronoun *me*, restricts the sense distinctly and intirely to one single person, as much as when you say; give that to none but *me*, you mean, that it is to be given to yourself, and to no other person. And it is much to be remarked, that our Saviour furnishes a very signal attestation to and confirmation of this doctrine, that there is but one person who is God, and none other besides him;

(a) When our Saviour's apostles preached the gospel to the heathens, worshipers of many false Deities, they always began with teaching them the *Divine Unity* Acts xvii. 2, 24, 31, xiv. 15. With the Jews, the method of our Saviour and his apostles was, to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah; i. e. their great expected prophet, and promised messenger of Jehovah, the most high God, the God of their fathers.

him; by the manner in which he cites Moses for it, and refers to him.

*Eusebes.* Be pleased to tell me how that was; and what it might be that called Christ out to speak at all upon the subject?

*Artemon.* We are told that *One of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him; Which is the first commandment of all?* Observe the solemnity of our Saviour's reply to this man, which is in the very words of Moses, Deut. vi. 4, 5. *And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; (a) the LORD is our God, the LORD alone: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* The answer of the scribe, (with which our Saviour expresses himself greatly satisfied) lays down the doctrine of the

*Divine*

(a) Le Clerc on Deut. vi, 4. takes notice of the mistake in our english bible, in translating; *The LORD our God is one LORD*, instead of *The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*; and observes that the hebrew construction requires it to be so translated; and moreover, that Jehovah (which we, after the greek, translate LORD) being a proper name, it is hardly sense to say, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, any more than it would be to say, George our king is one George, or for a Philistine to have said, Dagon our God is one Dagon.



*Divine Unity* in the strongest and most definite language, and shews how strictly it was taken by Christ himself, and the Jews in general at that time, ver. 32. *And the scribe said unto him, of a truth, master, thou hast said well: for there is ONE GOD; and there is none other but HE. (b)*

*Eusebes.* As I perceive that our Saviour delivers this doctrine of Moses concerning God, as his own belief, I should be glad to have your thoughts upon this circumstance, with respect to the subject of our inquiry.

*Artemon.* It immediately and directly follows from it; that in the opinion of Jesus, as of Moses, God is one single person, in the strictest possible sense of the word. And indeed, who can love with the *whole* heart; (as here enjoined) who can give their *highest* love to more persons than one?

### INQUIRY III.

*Whether the God of the Israelites formerly, and of their descendants the Jews now, be the same with the God of the Christians?*

*Eusebes.* I BEG to know if our Saviour, upon any occasion, condemned the Jews in his time for being guilty of polytheism and idolatry in worship-

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(b) Dr. Clarke observes, that in this text, Mark xii. 32, most of the ancient MSS. omit the word *God*; and then it stands thus, *Of a truth master,*  
*thou*

ping any other than Jehovah, the God of Israel, the one living and true God?

*Artemon.* We never read of his blaming them in the least in this respect. What he condemned them for, was their disobedience to the laws of God, and not receiving himself as his messenger, their great promised prophet, the Messiah, the Christ; but wilfully shutting their eyes against the powerful convincing evidence which he gave them of his divine mission.

*Eusebes.* Do we find our Saviour at any time making mention of himself having the same God with the rest of the Jewish nation?

*Artemon.* There is a striking instance of this in his conversation with the woman of Samaria. Upon her asking him which was the right worship, the Samaritan or the Jewish? He replies, (John iv. 22. *Ye (Samaritans) worship what ye do not know: We (Jews) worship what we do know: for salvation is of the Jews.* In which declaration it is plain that he owns himself to be one of the Jewish people, and a worshiper of the most high God, the Father, in common with them.

*Eusebes.* Can you assign any acknowledgement of this kind made by Christ, that is more explicit and particular?

*Artemon.*

*thou hast well said, (ver.) that He (the Lord), Jehovah, mentioned, ver. 29.) is One, and that there is none other but He.*

*Artemon.* Yes: there is something exceedingly remarkable in the message which he sent to his drooping apostles, by Mary Magdalene, soon after he was raised from the dead. For he therein bids her acquaint them, for their encouragement, that they had the same God and Father with themselves, to whom he was soon to depart; and who would continue his blessing and protection both to them and to himself: *Jesus saith unto her, go to MY BRETHREN, and say unto them; I ascend unto MY FATHER, and your Father; and to MY GOD, and your God.* John xx. 17.

*Eusebes.* What do you collect from this message of Christ to his apostles, which seems so very extraordinary?

*Artemon.* These three important consequences result from it:

1. That the God of the Jews is, by the confession of Jesus, the God of the christians: for this was their common God, and Father, acknowledged by himself and his apostles:

2. That Jesus cannot be the most high God, nor in any sense to be acknowledged as such, since he confesses himself to have the same God and Father with the rest of mankind:

3. That it is utterly contradictory, and impossible, that Jesus should be the most high God, that he should be any thing but a creature, however great his powers and excellencies, who owns his

apostles to be his (a) brethren, i. e. his fellow-mortals. *The most high, the eternal God, has no brethren: can have none.*

*Eusebes.* You say that our Saviour Christ, never in his own time, blamed the people of the Jews for falling into the idolatry of other nations; or worshipping any other but the one only true God: Did his apostles ever find fault with their countrymen on this account?

*Artemon.*

(a) It is worthy of note, that our Saviour, when referring to his highest state of dignity and exaltation, does not disdain to call his virtuous and faithful followers among mankind, his kindred and relations: a circumstance this, which one would hope might in time draw men off from worshipping him as the supreme God, whom they are at the same time to consider as their brother. It is in that beautiful representation of the day of judgment, where speaking of himself before hand, as who was to preside at that awful tribunal, he says; *And the king shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these MY BRETHREN, ye have done unto me*, Matth. xxv. 46. See also Heb. ii. 12, 16, 17, where ver. 16, is wrongly translated, viz. *he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham*: whereas it ought to be *he layeth not hold of, i. e. he saveth not angels, but he saveth the seed of Abraham*. St. Paul also calls Christ, *the first born, or chief among MANY BRETHREN*. Rom. viii. 29.



*Artemon.* By no means, far from it: they continually bear testimony, that their countrymen were irreproachably right and exact in this important point; and moreover, that *the God of the Jews was the God of the christians also.* To their rulers, who had forbidden them to teach in the name of Jesus, Peter, and the other apostles, answered and said; *We ought to obey God rather than men. The GOD OF OUR FATHERS raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour.* Acts v. 29, 30, 31. See also iii. 13, &c. iv. 24, 27, with many other passages in the book; and in St. Paul's epistles.

*Eusebes.* Have the Jews, since our Saviour's time, apostatized into idolatry, or fallen away from the worship of Jehovah, the only true God, the Father and creator of all things, whom Jesus and his apostles acknowledged and worshiped in common with them?

*Artemon.* I cannot answer your question better than in the words of a very respectable author of our own country, which made such an impression upon me in reading, that I believe I can recollect them very exactly. It is no less a man than the Lord Chancellor *King*, who gave this testimony to the Jews in this behalf, at the beginning of the present century. "The body of that people have been so immoveably fixed and confirmed, says he, in the belief of the *Unity of God*, which is every where

where inculcated in the mosaical law, that now throughout their sixteen hundred years captivity and dispersion, they have never quitted or deserted that principle, that *God is one*: as is evident from their thirteen articles of faith, composed by Maimonides, the second whereof is, the *Unity of the blessed God*. Which is there explained to be in such a peculiar and transcendent manner, as that nothing like it can be found. And in their liturgy, according to the use of the *Sepharadim*, or the *Spaniards*, which is read in these parts of the world in their synagogues, in the very first hymn, which is an admiring declaration of the excellencies of the Divine Nature, the repeated chorus is this: *All creatures, both above and below, testify and witness, all of them as one, that the LORD is one, and his name one (a)*.

*Eusebius*. Since you have proved the people of the Jews to have been intirely free from error in the object of their religious worship, in the days of our Saviour and of his apostles; and so to have continued from those times to our own: I desire to know if Jews and christians are now agreed concerning the object of religious worship?

*Artemon*. I am sorry to be obliged to answer, that they are not agreed: For besides Jehovah the only true

(a) *King's Critical History of the Apostles' Creed*, p. 55. 56.

true God, the Father, whom the jewish people then worshiped, and still worship, and whom Jesus and his apostles acknowledged, and taught, and worshiped, the greater part of christians in all countries, have adopted two other *persons*, whom they call *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Ghost*; both of whom they severally invoke in prayer, and worship: which is a great offence, and stumbling-block to the Jews; and makes them look upon christians as little better than idolaters: a matter this which most assuredly deserves the serious consideration of all christians.

#### INQUIRY IV.

*Whether Jesus Christ taught that he himself was God?*

*Eusebes.* We must not, however, come too rapidly to a conclusion on this weighty and important subject, about which so many learned men are of a contrary opinion, and are persuaded they have much to say for it. Perhaps, notwithstanding the strong proofs against the probability of it, which you have produced, our Saviour might teach that he was God, in some way incomprehensible by us, yet nevertheless true. I desire, therefore, to know if Christ did

did at any time intimate to his followers, that he was God, or stile himself so.

*Artemon.* He was so far from taking upon himself the stile and title of God, that he once rebuked a person for addressing him, though with well-intended respect, as if he were any thing approaching to that all perfect majesty, or had any thing good of himself, save what came from that Being who made him, and all things: *Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.*" Mat. xix. 17.

*Eusebes.* Was not our Saviour, however, accused by the Jews of making himself equal with God?

*Artemon.* Yes, he was accused of something of that kind, on two different occasions: it appears however from the defence which he made both times, that his adversaries did not charge him with taking upon himself to be Jehovah, the living and true God, a thing that never entered into their thoughts, but only with arrogating to himself the power and authority of God. For, in the first instance, where they accused him of making himself equal with God, or, as it ought to be translated, like to God, he vindicates himself by asserting, that he laid claim to no powers but what he had actually received from God: John v. 19. *Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth*



seeth the Father do, &c. And in the second instance, John x. 34, &c. he refutes the calumny by saying, that he had assumed to himself nothing more than became him, (a) as the Son of God, i.e. the Messiah; and that his miracles proved, that this high character belonged to him: "*If I do not the works of my Father, (such works as were the effects of a divine power) believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him; i. e. that I act by a power and authority from God.*"

## INQUIRY V.

*What is was that our Saviour taught concerning himself?*

*Eusebes.* BE so good as to inform me, in what terms our Saviour usually speaks of himself?

*Artemon.*

(a) ver. 36. "*Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?*" i. e. "*Say ye of him whom the Father hath consecrated, set apart and distinguished from the rest of men, by a supernatural birth, and by a communication of the spirit without measure, and by a special commission and authority to teach his will, that he blasphemeth, because he hath thus spoken?*" *L'Enfant* in loc.

*Artemon.* I shall present you with some few examples, by which you may form a judgment what were the sentiments which our Saviour had of himself, and doubtless would have us to entertain of him.

1. *The Son can do nothing of himself, (a) but what he seeth the Father do, John v. 19, 20. As the living Father (b) hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so, &c. My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man is desirous to do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. ver. 19, 20. I have not spoken of myself; but my Father who sent me, he gave a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. xii. 49.*

2. *And he that sent me, is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always, those things that please him. John viii. 29. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. xv. 10.*

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(a) He is here speaking of his miraculous works only; that he never wrought any but by an immediate direction and support from God.

(b) This is well paraphrased by Dr. Clarke: "As the Father, who is the original author of life, has communicated life to me, and will restore it to me after I have laid it down, by raising me again from the dead: so, &c."

3. *To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give : but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. Matt. xx. 23. It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Acts i. 7. But of that day and hour knoweth no one, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father, Mark xiii. 32.—but my Father ONLY. Matt. xxiv. 36.*

4. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth! —Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight. Matt. xi. 25, 26. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt, xxvi. 39. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, (a) I thank thee that Thou hast heard me : and I knew that thou*

(a) Dr. Clarke has not given our Saviour's true meaning in his paraphrase. It is thus better done by a learned and useful writer : " Father, I thank Thee, that thou hast granted my request, and enabled me to perform this mighty work. I know indeed, that thou always grantest my desires, but I have prayed to Thee at present, and now praise Thee for hearing me, that it may confirm the faith of those who are here, and convince them that I act with thy power, and by thy commission." —The gospel-history from the Text of the four Evangelists, with explanatory notes, by Robert Wait, Minister of Galston, 1765.

*thou hearest me always: but because of the people that stand by, I spoke, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me.* John xi. 41, 42.

*Eusebes.* What do you infer from these declarations of the blessed Jesus concerning himself?

*Artemon.* It is most evident, that he cannot be the most high God, who thus declares; 1. That he can do nothing of himself; that he is intirely under the direction and controul of another in all he does or says; from whom he received his very being; 2. that the reason of God's supporting him in so extraordinary a way, and giving him such high marks of his favour, was on account of his sincere obedience and endeavour to please him, and to keep his commandments; 3. *he* who declares himself ignorant of some things, and that others are not in his own disposal, but in that of another; that is, that he is so limited in knowlege and power; 4. *he* who worshiped, gave thanks and prayed to God continually for assistance; *he*, to whom such things belong, cannot be the most high God. But from these and many other similar declarations of Christ, if we will give credit to his own words, we must conclude, that he was a creature of God like ourselves, equally dependant upon him for every thing; and who, for his consummate worth, and perfect virtue and obedience, was raised to that high place and preeminence in the divine favour, which he now worthily enjoys.

INQUIRY



## INQUIRY VI.

*Whether what Christ thus taught concerning his being a creature, intirely dependant upon God, is only true of him in one sense, that is, according to his human nature, as it is called.*

*Eusebes.* I BEG you to resolve me in one thing, if our Saviour Christ had not *two* natures, so that he was God and man at the same time; and all the depreciating things that he speaks of himself as being a creature, belong to his human nature only?

*Artemon.* The supposition of Christ having two natures, a divine and human nature, taketh for granted the very thing in question, which ought to be proved, namely, that he is a being so compounded.

It is a supposal that has no countenance whatever in the sacred writings. Our Saviour most assuredly used no reserve or ambiguity in what he said of himself. When he averred that he received life from the Father and creator of all things; that he could do nothing of himself; he meant what he said most sincerely, and would have us so to understand him. When he prayed to God for help and strength, he stood in need (a) of what he prayed

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(a) *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, oh that Thou wouldst remove this cup from me! nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. Luke xxii. 41, 42.*

for, and wanted that assistance which was given him.

It is a thing in itself utterly impossible, that a being should be God and man ; creator and creature ; self-existent, eternal, independant, and limited, dependant, and having begining of existence, at the same time ; omniscient and omnipotent, and yet ignorant and weak. These things are not compatible : we should be shocked at their absurdity, if they were not instilled into us before we began to make use of our reason, and if many were not afterwards afraid to make use of it about them ; suffering themselves to be dazzled by great names and authorities, and imposed on by high antiquity, which can give no prescription to what is unintelligible and impossible. In short, this doctrine of Christ being possessed of two natures, is the fiction of ingenious men, determined at all events to believe Christ to be a different Being from what he really was, and uniformly declared himself to be ; by which fiction of theirs, they elude the plainest declarations of scriptures concerning him, and will prove him to be the most high God, in spite of his own most express and constant language to the contrary. And as there is no reasoning with such persons, they are to be pitied, and considered as being under a debility of mind in this respect, however sensible and rational in others.

## INQUIRY

## INQUIRY VII.

*Of the testimony and sentiment of the three former evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, concerning our Saviour Christ.*

*Eusebes.* I MUST again intreat you, that we may not leave any thing unexamined, and make too hasty a decision upon a point of this magnitude, which involves almost the whole christian world now, and for many ages, past, in the lamentable breach of the first commandment of God, given by Moses, and confirmed by Jesus; in the continued act and practice of idolatry, by acknowledging other persons to be Gods, besides Jehovah, the God of Israel, the one living and true God. But as there are other remaining arguments from the scriptures, by which some would prove Jesus to be the most high God; I would beg you next to take the trouble, in as concise a manner as you can, to acquaint me, what is said of him by those who are certainly best able to give us true information concerning him: I mean the sacred historians of the life of Christ, and his apostles; who conversed with him, and were instructed by him, that they might instruct others: whether they had any secret commission to teach what he judged proper to omit; either that he himself was the most high God, or that there was any other person who was God, but

the Father only. And as the three former evangelists wrote before St. John, and probably without seeing or knowing of each others writings, I should be glad first to know what their testimonies amount to on this head. Tell me then, I pray, what is the general account which they give of our Saviour Christ?

*Artemon.* The evangelists, Matthew and Luke, give us the pedigree of Jesus, from Abraham and David. Luke derives it from Adam. Both mention his extraordinary birth of Mary, and some instances of singular respect shewn him in his infancy. Luke touches briefly upon his *gradual* improvements in wisdom and virtue, though much above the common rate; of which he relates one instance, when he was no more than twelve years old. After which they both are wholly silent about him 'till the time of his manhood, when he entered upon his public ministry. At this period, Mark takes up the account, and begins *his* history. After which, they all three proceed, each in his own way, to note down the principal facts of our Saviour's public life, somewhat differently; so that you plainly perceive they did not write in concert or copy from each other, as they have all several facts and circumstances of the same fact, not marked by the others; and yet the whole of their narrative, in such harmony and accord with each other in what is substantial and important, as much confirms



firms the general truth of their history, by exhibiting them as so many several independent witnesses of the facts they relate. They all three begin with the baptism of Jesus by John; when he received the *holy spirit* from heaven, or gifts of a divine power and wisdom to fit him for his high office, and to enable him to give full proof of his commission and authority from God. They then relate the *temptation of the devil*, as it is called; which they all agree in dating at this time, and immediately before his entrance on his public ministry; so that however it is to be interpreted, it was something preparatory to it. After this, each gives what he thought a sufficient account of this divine Saviour's doctrine and preaching: of his ardent zeal and unwearyed labours to bring men to the knowledge of Divine Truth, and to be saved by it from sin and most lasting misery: the great wisdom and courage on the one hand, and gentleness and kindness on the other, with which he conducted himself in his unacceptable work of reforming mankind; closing their histories with his last sufferings and violent unjust death in the cause of God, and of the truth he had taught from him, together with his speedy restoration to life, by the power of God, in three days, according to his own prediction.

*Eusebes.* What now, I pray, appear upon the whole to have been the sentiments of these evangelists concerning their master, the holy Jesus, from these principal

principal circumstances of his life which you have recited from them ?

*Artemon.* They assuredly considered him, however excellent in virtue, and honoured with high divine powers, to be a creature of God, as well as themselves ; and had not the most distant thought of his being God, the most high God. For they give a very particular relation of his birth, as also of his death and burial. But the eternal, self-existent Being cannot be born, or have beginning of existence : God cannot die, or cease to exist. They also describe Jesus as growing, and making improvement in wisdom and virtue. But it is most derogatory to the infinite all-perfect mind, to suppose he can be wiser and better to-day than he was yesterday. They represent him, moreover, as exposed to temptations, so as to be in danger of being drawn aside by them from the paths of holiness and integrity. But it would be impious to imagine any thing of this kind incident to the Divine Being.

*Eusebes.* But does not St. Matthew intimate notwithstanding, as if Jesus was in some peculiar unknown way, God, when in describing the manner of his birth, he applies to him those words of Isaiah (vii. 14.) *Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Imanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us?* Matt. i, 23.

*Artemon.*

*Artemon.* In whatever way you consider the evangelist as applying this passage to the birth of Christ, it will amount only to this; that at the birth of the child, or by him, some way or other, *God would be with them*, would do something extraordinary, work some great deliverance for his people, confer some singular blessing on them: not that the infant babe would be the most high God, in any sense or manner whatsoever. The way of expression was familiar with the hebrew writers, and runs through the whole bible. *God is with any one*, when he does any thing extraordinary for him, (a) or by him. So Nicodemus, on seeing Christ's miracles, tells him, that he was persuaded (John iii. 2.) *that God was with him*, that he had an extraordinary power and commission for him. St. Luke also shews us how such phrases ought to be understood, and how easily and readily the common people among the Jews understood them, though we through prejudice and inattention make such a mystery of them. For when our Saviour had raised the widow's son to life, it is said; (Luke vii. 16.) *there came a fear on all: and they*

(a) Acts x. 38. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.* Here the sacred writer expressly declares, how God was with Jesus of Nazareth; namely, by those extraordinary powers conferred upon him.

they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet has risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people. God visited his people, say they. How visited them? Not in person, but by raising up a great prophet among them. This explains that language concerning the future times of the Messiah, so frequent in the prophetic writings: viz. *A voice crieth, In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH, make straight in the desert a highway for our God: —Get thee up upon a high mountain, O daughter, that bringest glad tidings to Sion: Exalt thy voice with strength, O daughter, that bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem. Exalt it; be not afraid: Say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold the Lord JEHOVAH shall come.* Isaiah xl. 3, 9, 10. God, the Lord Jehovah, did come to his people, when Jesus was raised up, of the family of Abraham and seed of David, and came among them, acting by a divine authority, and doing these mighty miracles of raising the dead to life, &c. in proof of it.

*Eusebes.* But does not St. Matthew, near the close of his history, (xxviii. 19.) teach that there are three persons, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, who are each of them God; when he tells us, that Jesus ordered his apostles, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit? Are not these three put on a level, and made equal to each other?

*Artemon.*



*Artemon.* Assuredly, no one could rise up from the reading of St. Matthew's gospel, and imagine that any such doctrine was to be extracted from these words. For in all the foregoing parts of his book, he never speaks of Christ but as their great expected prophet, and the messenger of God, gifted with extraordinary divine powers. Nor does he ever describe the spirit or holy spirit as any thing but a divine power, the power or gift of God. So that unless a man brought along with him a previous persuasion of three persons being each of them God, he could never discover it here, or in any thing else delivered by the evangelist. Moreover, the being baptized into any person, does not bespeak that person to be God, as is well known; for St. Paul makes mention of the Israelites being *baptized into Moses*, 1 Cor. x. 2. Nor does our Saviour's being thus joined together with the Father, imply any the least equality to him, any more than Moses being in like manner joined together with Almighty God, implied that Moses was equal to God; where it is said, (Exod. xiv. 31.) *the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and his servant Moses*: or that king David was the most high God, because it is said, (1 Chron. xxix. 20.) *that the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshiped the LORD and the king*. I would farther observe, that the apostles, who were the best judges of their divine master's intentions, did not think there was  
any

any thing so important in this form of words in baptism; or so extraordinary a mystery therein, as many have made of it. For we never find afterwards that they confined themselves to the use of it; but on the contrary, when they baptized persons, they baptized them into the name of Jesus (*a*) only; which indeed comprized the other, being an abridgement of it. For the true meaning of being *baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit*, is the being baptized or initiated into the knowlege or profession of that gospel or doctrine of eternal salvation, which the God and Father of all, revealed to mankind by the ministry of his son Christ Jesus, and confirmed by the gifts of an extraordinary divine power, communicated to Jesus and his apostles. One wonders that those who would hence deduce that Jesus is the most high God, equal to the Father, do not consider that in the very same instant, Jesus himself declares, that his power, great as it was, had been received from another; that is, he had it not of his own. ver. 18. *All power is GIVEN unto me.* Add to all this, the utter improbability that this apostle and evangelist should introduce two persons, as being each of them God, equal to the most high God, two new Gods, the Son and Holy Spirit, so intirely

(*a*) Acts viii. 16. *They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.* See also x. 48. xix. 5. and Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27.

intirely contrary to their jewish belief, and first commandment of God, delivered by Moses, and confirmed by Jesus himself, *viz.* that there was but one single person, Jehovah, who was God, and Father of all; and this strange doctrine, so different from what this sacred writer had all along maintained, to be thrust in, at the end of his book, by the by as it were, without any preceding notice, or proof of it. It is plain, and has been shewn, that the evangelist asserts no such doctrine: but it would have been hardly credible, had he asserted it in such a way.

## INQUIRY VIII.

*Of the testimony and sentiment of the apostle John concerning our Saviour Christ.*

*Ensebes.* You have left nothing farther for me to ask you concerning the real sentiments of the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, relating to Jesus Christ; who, I see, were far from looking upon him to be God, the most high God. But as St. John has been held openly and directly to assert this, in the very preface to his gospel; I must beg you particularly to favour me with your sentiments on that head. And I am the more anxious to hear your full discussion of the matter,

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because

because christian writers inform us, and the book itself confirms the tradition, that this evangelist wrote after the other three, and after having seen their writings, and with a view to supply some things that had been omitted by them. I beg leave therefore to ask, if it be Jesus, as commonly supposed, whom St. John describes under the title of *The word*, ο λογος, at the entrance of his history? *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the begining with God. All things were made by him; and so on.* John i. 1, 2.

*Artemon.* I think, and am persuaded, that we may, without any hesitation, pronounce, that it can, in no sort or degree, be said of Jesus Christ, that he was in the begining, before any thing was made; or, that he was God and creator of all things. Such language can belong to none but the most high God. For there are not two supreme Gods and Creators; nor can be. And that the apostle speaks not here of Jesus, but of God only, is most evident, if we will but attend to his words, and be guided by them. For he adds in the same breath and sentence, θεος ην ο λογος, *God was the Word*; i. e. that *Word*, of which he had been speaking.

*Eusebes.* But, how can God be the *Word*? Is it not a most strange, unintelligible way of speaking?

*Artemon.*



*Artemon.* However it may seem to us, there was nothing extraordinary or difficult to be understood in it, to the hebrews his countrymen, or to persons acquainted with the stile of the sacred writings; for whose use he composed his history of Christ. In his other works, we find him saying; (1 John 1. 5.) *God is light*; as in him is the most unspotted purity and holiness: and again (iv. 16.) *God is love*; as in him is the most perfect benevolence; and in like sort here, *God is the Word*, i. e. he may be so called, because in him is all wisdom and power: by the term *Word*, understanding the wisdom or the powerful (a) word and command, by which all things were made: and either of these two senses, the term, *λογος*, used by St. John, properly holds forth to us.

*Eusebes.* What then do you imagine, Artemon, to have moved the apostle to place such an extraordinary introduction before his history of Christ? What was his design it?

*Artemon.* There is nothing in it, Eusebes, so very extraordinary; or unsuitable to his usual stile in writing, which abounds much in high figurative expressions: in which he appears to have copied after his master, Jesus. And his design throughout this

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preface,

(a) Ps. xxxiii. 6. *By the word (τω λογω) of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*

preface, very obviously, and very proper and befitting the work he was entering upon, is, to teach that all things were made by and proceeded from the most perfect Reason or Wisdom, which is God himself, and not from any inferior power or agent, which the eastern and greek philosophers maintained, and which some of them too soon brought into the christian church : and that from this Word or Wisdom of God, came all the lights and assistances, which mankind had at different times received by divine messages, and Prophets, especially by Jesus Christ, who was superior to them all ; and who was *the true light*, by way of excellence, above all others. And in using this language, the apostle most probably had in his eye, and imitated that description of the most high God, in *Proverbs* viii. where Wisdom is introduced as a Divine Person, who had been with God *from everlasting, from the beginning, before the world was made. When he prepared the heavens, I was there. Then was I by him, and I was daily his delight.* All which beautiful imagery is contrived and adopted to teach in a more lively way, that God made all things, and governs them, with the most perfect wisdom.

*Eusebes.* But when our evangelist says of this Word or Wisdom, that it *was with God*, and repeats immediately, as it were to impress us the more strongly with it ; *The same was in the beginning with*

*with God*: Does it not imply, that this *Word* or *Wisdom* was a real intelligent being or person, who is thus represented as being with God; and not a divine attribute or quality.

*Artemon*. It no more implies this than the language I have just now mentioned, of Solomon, concerning *Wisdom*; (Prov. viii.) *Then was I by him*, and so on, proves *Wisdom* to have been an intelligent person; another deity. Our apostle, in another place, says; (1 John i. 2) *We shew unto you that eternal life, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, and was manifested unto us*. No one here understands, that *eternal life* was a real person, though spoken of in this lively style, as being or living with the Father. Nor should we do it in the other case, if through our heathen prejudices we were not prone to catch at every expression that would favour the notion of a multiplicity of Gods.

*Eusebes*. Are there any arguments which confirm this interpretation that you have given, and prove that the evangelist was far from intending to assert that Jesus was *the Word*, which is here characterized as the most high God and creator of all things?

*Artemon*. There are many arguments of holy Scripture which shew this in the most convincing manner. For

1. Our evangelist could not set out at first, and stile Jesus the most high God, and within a few

pages of his book afterwards, introduce the same Jesus declaring, as he continually does, that he was himself a creature of God, depending upon him, and who received life and every thing from him; and afterwards also asserting, as I have had occasion to mention before, that the Father, as distinguished from himself, and all other beings, was the only true God; and that he himself had the same God, and Father, in common with the rest of the human race: whom he calls his brethren. Such contradictions no writer of a sound understanding can fall into.

2. It cannot be imagined that a pious jew, like our apostle, should, as I before observed to you with respect to St. Matthew, bring in a new God, a new, and before unknown creator of the world, in flat contradiction to the first and second commandments of their divine law; and in the face of those many declarations of Jehovah by his prophet (*a*); that *He* only was God, and no other besides him; *He* only, creator of all things. And this, moreover, to be but once asserted, without any proof, in the beginning of his book: and never to recur to it afterwards; never again to stile Jesus the *Word*, or call him God; but to speak of him, and describe him as speaking of himself, as being nothing of himself, but whatever he was, receiving it from God. Such suppositions are  
not

(*a*) See Isaiah xlii. v. xliv. 24. xlv. 11, 12.



not within the line of credibility, where there is any degree of sense or consistency.

3. It is also to be observed, that our evangelist, St. John, joined with the rest of the apostles, in a prayer to almighty God, in which Jesus is particularly and expressly excluded from being God and the creator, and in a very striking manner contradistinguished from that adorable majesty; from him who is alone sovereign and supreme. It is near the beginning of the second treatise of St. Luke, and runs thus; "*Sovereign Master (a); Thou art the God who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;—grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by thy stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy (b) servant Jesus.*" Acts iv. 24, 29, 30.  
St. John,

(a) *Διωνῆα*, *Sovereign Master* rather than *Lord*: a name in scripture appropriated to God.

(b) It hath been shewn at large in another place, (see "A Dissertation on praying to Christ." p. 89,) that the apostles, in this prayer, call our Saviour, God's *holy servant*, not *child*, as we translate it. I find also Dr. Clarke intimating that the word should be translated *servant*, and that name given to Christ, not only in this chapter, but also Acts iii. 13, and 25. It deserves notice here, that Almighty God, by the prophet Isaiah, more than once calls the future Messiah,

St. John, and the other apostles, who offered this prayer to God, by addressing him, *Thou*, as one single person, could never think there was any other person who was God ; or consider Jesus, whom in this very prayer they call the *servant* of God, as being at the same time the most high God, *by whom all things were made.* John i. 3.

*Eusebes.* Can you shew it probable by any other argument, that St. John did not in the begining of his gospel intend to describe Christ as being the *Word*, who was God, and creator of all things ?

*Artemon.* There is one proof, which though not directly taken from the scriptures, does much confirm the evidence, that the evangelist intended no such thing. And this is furnished by the *creed*, called the apostles' ; which, although it was not written by them, is on all hands allowed to be very ancient, especially the former parts it ; and therefore may be well reckoned to contain the sentiments of the apostles, and of St. John included amongst them, concerning the only true God. For it teaches,

Messiah, the Christ, *his servant ; Behold my servant, whom I will uphold ; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth : I will make my spirit rest upon him.* Isaiah xliii. 1. Bishop Lowth's version. See also lii. 13. liii. 11. Can we wonder that Jews are averse to christianity, when they see christians worshipping him as the most high God, whom their prophets call God's servant ?

teaches, that there is but one God, who is the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and that Jesus Christ, his beloved son, who was born of the virgin Mary, suffered the ignominious death of a slave, under Pontius Pilate, the roman governor of Judea; and that there was a *Holy Spirit*, or extraordinary divine power, communicated from God, by which the gospel was preached and established in the world. Whoever composed this creed, most certainly did not believe (a) Jesus Christ

(a) The *apostles creed* is indeed, in the strictest sense, an Unitarian creed; and so early an attestation to the doctrine of the *Divine Unity* being received and acknowledged by christians, is of importance. In a well-known *Catechism*, immediately after the repetition of this creed, this question follows; "What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?" To which the child is made to give this answer; "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind, Thirdly, in God the holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God." But can any one truly say, that such a doctrine is contained in this creed; and will not children so taught, believe that there are three Gods, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and go to the reading of the scriptures afterwards with this undue bias on their minds, which may be with difficulty afterwards laid aside; perhaps never?

Christ to be the most high God, and creator of all things : for God cannot suffer or die ; which has been observed before, but hardly can be too often repeated.

*Eusebes.* What does our evangelist mean afterwards, when going on farther to treat of the *Word*, ο *λογος*, which, according to your interpretation, is God himself, he says, “ *The Word was made flesh* ; or, as it might more justly be rendered in english, *The Word became man*, a mortal man, and dwelt among us, and so on. Can this be said of God ? Is it possible for him to become a man ?

*Artemon.* Unquestionably that is a thing impossible, and far from the intention of the apostle. Nevertheless his words will be found to have a very just, proper, and easy meaning, if we attend to the design of St. John in them. For here he comes to the point, for the sake of which he had been giving such an animated and magnificent description of the supreme Being ; namely, that he might introduce the Character of Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, who was to be the subject of his book, with the greater solemnity in this 14th verse. “ Now, says he, this *Word*, or *Wisdom* of God, which, in a very just and well known sense, is God himself ; by which he first made all things, animate and inanimate, men and angels ; and from which proceeded all his former extraordinary communications of light and knowlege to mankind ; was at last imparted in the fullest manner to Jesus, and resided  
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in him : by which all men might plainly discover, and we his apostles had undeniable evidence, that he was the Messiah, the Christ, whom all were to hearken to and obey, as God himself: *The Word*, says he, (Wisdom) *became man, and dwelt among us* (in the man Christ Jesus); *and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten* (or most beloved) *of the Father.*

*Eusebas.* Can you illustrate this interpretation which you have given of the words of St. John, by any similar language of Christ or the other apostles?

*Artemon.* *Jesus saith unto him; have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the father: and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: and the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.* John xiv. 9. In this passage, the Father, whom Christ speaks of as dwelling in him, corresponds exactly with the *Word*, or *Wisdom* becoming man, and dwelling in Christ. And in both places, the expressions denote, in the bold figurative stile of the scriptures, the influence of the Divine Wisdom and Power, by which Jesus acted.

Exactly of the same cast and import is that language of the apostle Paul, Colos. ii. 8, 9. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,*

*ceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (rather of the divine power) bodily.* To understand this, you are to take along with you, that in the apostolic age, it pleased God to bestow various gifts of extraordinary knowledge, of ability to teach others, of speaking in the language of other nations, &c. 1 Cor. xii. xiii. xiv. promiscuously on believers, for the support of the christian church in its infancy. With a view to this, St. Paul, in another place, prays for the christians at Ephesus, that they *might be filled with all the fulness of God.* (Eph. iii. 19.) i. e. might abound in all those extraordinary gifts from God, which were needful for them. Now here he says, that these gifts of a Divine Wisdom and Power were bestowed on Christ without measure (a), for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Divine Power; which is really nothing else but saying, in other words, that the Divine Word, or Wisdom became man, and dwelt in Christ Jesus. With just cause therefore does the apostle exhort to adhere to Christ, and not follow that false philosophy, and worldly accommodating wisdom, with which some were already beginning to corrupt the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, and in which they unhappily

(a) *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*  
John iii. 34.

happily succeeded after the apostles were gone off the stage.

*Eusebes.* It has been maintained by many persons, that in this gospel of St. John, Christ is expressly declared to be God, in that narrative which the evangelist gives of his condescension to his incredulous disciple Thomas, by affording him sensible proof of the reality of his being raised to life; when convinced of his being really alive, from the dead, (John xx. 28.) *he answered and said unto him; My Lord, and my God."* I beg to know how is this to be understood, if Jesus be not God?

*Artemon.* But that the blindness of prejudice, Eusebes, knows no bounds, one might wonder how it could enter into the minds of so many learned and good men in all ages, that this disciple of Christ, who a little before had given up his master Jesus as absolutely dead; and could not be prevailed upon by evidence that was satisfactory to others, to believe but that he was really dead: that this man, with such sentiments, should instantly address Jesus as the most high God, whom till that moment he had supposed without life, merely on receiving sensible proof of his having been under such an error concerning him. Christ's being brought to life again could be a proof of nothing else but of the favour and goodness of God in restoring it to him: not a proof, that he was God, the most high God. And the emotions it might naturally raise in

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Thomas's

Thomas's breast, would be expressive of his admiration and thanksgiving to the heavenly Father, which made him break out into that exclamation, "*My Lord, and my God.*" This may be considered as an imperfect ejaculation or prayer to God; and had he uttered it at full length, he might have said, "O my Lord, and my God, I thank thee for this thine unexpected benignity, in raising my dead master Jesus to life again." Or, taking the words, as some do, in the nominative case, the sense may be thus supplied, "My Lord and my God hath done this great thing." But if any, still, notwithstanding, will persist in believing that Thomas here calls Christ, God, they should take along with them, that Christ, not long before, had told his disciples in plain words, that he had the same God and Father with themselves: so that he can only be God in such a sense as a creature can be so called. In short, no proof can be drawn from this speech of Thomas's, either that Jesus was the most high God, or that Thomas believed him so to be.

#### D I A L O G U E IX.

*Of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, as it may be collected from St. Luke's second volume, called The Acts.*

*Eusebes.* You have convinced me that the evangelist St. John intirely agrees with the three former evangelists, in never teaching or delivering any thing



thing concerning the holy Jesus, which implied that he was the most high God. But we shall not complete the evidence which one of them, St. Luke, gives on this subject, unless we take in the second volume of his gospel-history, called, *The Acts*. And as his design in writing this, was, to shew how the gospel was first proposed and preached to jews and heathens by the apostles, it must be curious and important to know what they say of their divine Master; how they exhibit him to the world. But as this same historian has recorded several appearances of Christ after his resurrection, I should be obliged to you first to acquaint me if any thing presented itself at such times; whence it might be concluded, that Christ was the most high God?

*Artemon.* There is certainly nothing like this, in the account which St. Luke gives of what passed at our Saviour's taking his final leave of his disciples: but it must have had quite the contrary effect upon every one present, and upon all that now pay any attention to it. For, in what their divine Master says to them at that time, he very naturally informs them, that his power and knowlege were limited; and that the direction and government of the world was not his province, but belonged to the heavenly Father alone. "*When they (his disciples) were come together, they asked of him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the*

*times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power."* Acts i. 7.

*Eusebes.* Much has been said and written concerning the heavenly vision which Stephen was favoured with a little before his death, and the request which he at that time preferred to Christ: But I beg to know if we can thereby learn what were the sentiments of that holy man, and first martyr for the gospel, concerning our Lord.

*Artemon.* Whatever be determined concerning the address, which he on that occasion offered to Christ, we may be assured that Stephen did not believe him to be above the condition of a creature: for he speaks of him as being the *Son of man*, in that state of exaltation and honour in which he beheld him: "*Lo, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.*" Acts vii. 56.

*Eusebes.* What information did Christ give to Paul concerning his own true character, when he first made himself known to him from heaven, with a view to make him his apostle, and the chief teacher of the heathen world? Does he acquaint him, that he himself was God, and to be acknowledged as such?

*Artemon.* No; very far from it. In that heavenly state of glory, the Lord Jesus owns himself to be the man that once had for so long time his abode in the mean town of Nazareth in Galilee. For thus

thus does our apostle himself relate what then passed: “*I fell upon the ground, and heard a voice, saying unto me; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH, whom thou persecutest.*” Acts xii. 7, 8.

*Eusebes.* In what manner did the apostles of Christ speak of him, in their first preaching of the gospel to the world, after his resurrection?

*Artemon.* The words of the apostle Peter, in his first sermon to his countrymen, are very remarkable, and deserve the attention of all christians. They are these; Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man, (a), authorized among you by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him ye have taken, being delivered up (to you) by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.*

*Eusebes.* What appear hence to be the apostle Peter's sentiments concerning his divine master, and which he was desirous the audience should carry away with them from his discourse?

*Artemon.* Jesus of Nazareth, being here evidently contradistinguished from the God and governor of the world, as one of the human race most

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(a) *anodiduymanos*) not approved, but authorized, demonstrated to be the Christ, by miracles, &c.

highly favoured of God; this must have been Peter's persuasion concerning him, and what he was studious to inculcate upon his hearers. For he evidently speaks of him; as a human being, *as of one a man*, who died as all others do, though by a violent and unjust death; but God, he says, (ver. 24 to 33) vindicated his innocence, and divine mission, by restoring him soon to life, according to the predictions that had been given before concerning him. And he farther informs them, that the great miracles they had seen wrought by Jesus among them, were not done by any powers of his own, but by a power from God, who thus gave testimony to him. After which he concludes, with observing to them, that the dignified titles of *the Christ*, and *the Lord*, i. e. of the great prophet, teacher, and lawgiver of his church and people, of all that did or should believe in him; that these honours were bestowed upon him by Almighty God: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know, assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST.* Acts ii. 36.

The very same conclusions concerning our Saviour, who, and what he was, are to be drawn from the manner in which Peter afterwards, by divine appointment, taught the knowledge of Christ and of his gospel to Cornelius, a roman military officer, stationed in Judea, a person of eminent piety and virtue. The account of it is contained in *Acts x.* ver. 34 to 44; and you will do well to consult



consult it. For it is no less remarkable than the extract which I just now gave you from that apostle's first sermon: and both of them, without all doubt, hold forth that specific character of the blessed Jesus, by which the apostle was desirous to have him known and distinguished all over the world.

Not unlike also is St. Paul's first sermon at Antioch, Acts xiii. 16, 40. to a mixed audience of jews and pious heathens: only there is one particular circumstance therein to be remarked, viz. that he begins with informing the heathens among them, (ver. 17.) that it was the *God of the people of Israel*, (the only true God and creator of all things) *who had raised up unto Israel, of the family of David their former king, that Saviour Jesus*, in whose name he spake to them.

*Eusebes.* You have given several instances what it was that the jews and pious heathens, who already believed in God, were taught concerning Jesus Christ, by those who first preached the gospel by authority from God to them; I should be glad to be informed in what manner they address themselves to teach and convert the idolatrous heathens?

*Artemon.* We have a remarkable example of this in St. Paul's celebrated speech at Athens, when summoned to declare his doctrine before the judges of the court of Areopagus.

*Eusebes.* What is the method there taken by the apostle to bring them to the knowledge of the gospel?

*Artemon.*

*Artemon.* Paul informs them that there was but one God, the maker, governor, and preserver of all things, ever present to his creatures, who was to be worshiped in purity of heart, who inspected the actions of men, and would call them to strict account for them hereafter, by that person whom he had appointed to teach them his will, of which he had given the fullest assurance to all that would attend to it. “*God, that made the world and all things therein: he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, &c. The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Acts xviii. 24. &c.

*Eusebes.* Why is it, do you imagine, that the apostle mentions only this single circumstance to these men concerning our Saviour, that he was appointed of God to be the future judge of men?

*Artemon.* It is probable that St. Luke selected this for brevity sake, because it was that which St. Paul principally dwelt upon, being what was most likely to awaken and alarm the minds of these dark and profligate idolaters, as were the greatest part of those to whom he spoke; although it is to be presumed that he gave them other information more at large concerning Christ and his doctrine.

*Eusebes.*

*Eusebes.* According to this account, which St. Luke gives of it, what impresson was the apostle's discourse calculated to leave upon the minds of the Athenians, concerning Jesus Christ? Would they take St. Paul to be a setter forth of strange gods, in their own way, as some of them, according to their idolatrous notions and prejudices, supposed him to be, before he began to speak; and that Jesus was some new God, added to those they already had, and one whom they had never heard of before?

*Artemon.* By no means. Those amongst them who paid any serious attention to what was uttered by the apostle, would depart persuaded, that in Paul's account there was but one God, the creator of the world; and that Jesus was a man, *ame*, who was God's messenger, and by him designed and qualified for a high and most important office in the future world, and that therefore it was of great concernment for them to be acquainted with the message and doctrine which he delivered from God.

*Eusebes.* But does not St. Paul, when taking leave of the elders of the church of Ephesus, call Christ, God; where he says, Acts xx. 28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the holy spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood?*

*Artemon.* The best and most antient manuscript copies of the New Testament, have not here, the church

church of GOD, but the church of THE LORD, i. e. of Jesus ; and so the most ancient fathers cite it, and so without all doubt it ought to be read. It is one of those astonishing and at the same time most humbling considerations, that persons of large and improved understanding in other respects, should ever entertain the degrading thought, that the most high God and creator of all things, could, in any sort or degree, or by any connection or union whatever, shed blood and die.

### INQUIRY X.

*Of the doctrine of the apostle Paul, concerning God and Christ.*

*Eusebes.* I HAVE reaped so much benefit, Artemon, from your attention to my inquiries and doubts on these interesting subjects, that I must beg you to indulge me with it a little longer. St. Paul, in the general turn of his writings, always speaks of God as one single person, in such a way as no one can mistake him ; and in some places he particularly asserts the *Divine Unity* in the strongest terms, and seems an utter stranger to what is called the *Trinity*, or three persons all together making up one God. For he says, 1. Cor. v. *To us, (christians) there is but One God, the Father.* And Eph. iv. 6. *There is but One God, and Father of all, who is above all, &c.* If therefore there be any  
meaning



meaning in words, I must conclude that the apostle believed that there was no other person who was God, but the Father. And yet there are several passages in his epistles, in which he appears to speak of Jesus Christ as being the most high God, and creator of all things. For example, in his epistle to the Romans, (ix. 5.) he says of Christ, that he *is over all, God, blessed for ever*. If Christ be the God over all, blessed for ever, are there not then *two* Gods, contrary to our apostle's repeated assertion, that there is but *one* God, the Father? Surely he could not so flatly contradict himself, and say, that Christ was another God, when he had maintained that there was but one God, the Father? I should be glad to know where the mistake lies in this matter; for some mistake I am sure there must be.

*Artemon.* If men had not been prepossessed with the notion of Christ being the most high God, they could never have applied these words of the apostle to him. If you turn to the place, Rom. ix. 5. you will see that he is enumerating and extolling the religious advantages, and privileges of the jewish people, and closes the whole with saying, *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*; i. e. that even Christ himself by his descent, was a man of the jewish nation. Now can any one imagine, that St. Paul, after having said this, should go to add, that this same person of their kindred and nation, an Israelite born,

born, was the most high God, blessed for ever : a thing that must have shocked them, and turned them against every thing else that he could offer, as they were unmoveable and rooted in this, that there was no other God besides Jehovah, the God of their Fathers? No : an unprejudiced reader would see that after the words, *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, should be put a full stop. And then to follow, in a sentence by itself, *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever*. This, as the learned know, is a proper construction of the apostle's words, and it is very agreeable to his manner of writing, to throw in such a devout ejaculation, and then proceed with his subject (a).

*Eusebes*. But does not St. Paul assert, that there is another God, equal to the Father, when he says, (Philip. ii. 6.) that *Christ Jesus thought it no robbery to be equal with God*?

*Artemon*. English readers are much imposed (b) upon by such a translation of the apostle's words. The learned

(a) Some may approve the very probable reading of the apostle's words, offered to the world by Dr. Whitby, and others after him, viz. *whose or (of whom) are the Fathers ; and from whom is Christ according to the flesh ; whose or (of whom) is the God over all, blessed for ever*. Whitby's Last Thoughts, p. 80.

(b) The following hymn, which goes upon the idea of there being two equal Gods, and one of them a man,

learned know that they mean no such thing: that instead of, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; it should be translated, he did not eagerly covet to be like to God, to appear in the likeness of God; i. e. was not ambitious, or fond of exerting those divine powers which had been bestowed upon him: on account of which he is just before said to have been *in the form* (i. e. likeness) *of God*; i. e. to have such an outward resemblance of him as those divine powers gave him. So that our apostle does indeed assert that our Saviour was possessed of high divine powers in which he resembled the most high God: but at the same time, he goes on to say, that Christ was so far from being himself

a man, shews one of the unhappy consequences of authorizing such a wrong translation and perversion of the apostle's words.

——“ Yet there is One of human frame,  
 “ Jesus, array'd in flesh and blood,  
 “ *Thinks it no robbery to claim*  
 “ *A full equality* with God.  
 “ Their glory shines with equal beams;  
 “ Their essence is for ever one,  
 “ Tho' they are known by different names,  
 “ The Father-God, and God the Son.  
 “ Then let the name of Christ our King,  
 “ With equal honours be ador'd.”

Watts. Hymn li. book 2,

H

himself God, or (b) equal to him; that he was even dependent upon God for these divine powers, as well as for every thing else that he possessed, which

(b) It is a paraphrase by no means warranted by the apostle's language, which bishop Hurd, in his sermons, lately published, vol. ii. p. 164, has given of those words of our english translation, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; i. e. "Jesús, Christ, " (says his lordship) was in no haste to seize upon, " and assert his right of equality with God." For it is a circumstance well known to the learned, that the word *ισος*, which his lordship would have to convey the idea of equality here, does frequently signify a resemblance, a likeness only; and the propriety of giving that sense to it in this place, is confirmed by this, that it is a word that admits of degrees of comparison, *ισοτερος*, *ισοιαντος*, which cannot be asserted of things equal, that they are more or less equal. See *Whitby* in loc. and *Emlyn*, vol. i. p. 92. note. St. Paul therefore gives no countenance whatever to such an interpretation of his words. Moreover, his lordship surely did not sufficiently attend to the consequences of maintaining that Christ *claimed a right of equality with God*. For "the asserting him to be equal to God (to use the words of an able commentator) must of necessity carry in it an assertion of a plurality of Gods. If there be a God, and another who is equal to him in nature, perfections, and dominion, the latter must be as truly a God, in the highest and most absolute sense

as



which were God's gracious gift to him. *Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and GRACIOUSLY BESTOWED upon him* [*ὑπερῶτα*] *a name which is above every name; that, in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.* Philip. ii. 9, 10, 11.

*Eusebes.* But how shall I get over that other passage of St. Paul, without allowing that he looked upon Christ as God; where he maintains that all things were created by him; (Colos. i. 16.) *For by him, (says he) were all things created that are in*

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*heaven,*

as the former; and when men have said all they can, *a God and a God are as certainly two Gods, as a man and a man are two men.* Nor can this be evaded, by pretending that they are not two Gods, because they are one and the same Being, and so one and the same God; for the inspired writers are utter strangers to such assertions, that a Being is equal to itself." I would farther add; should not those persons who thus give to Almighty God *an equal*, and *one* who, in this very passage, is said to have suffered death, in obedience to God; should not they consider those awful demands made of old to the idolatrous Israelites? "*To whom then will ye liken me? or shall I be equal, saith the holy One? To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?*" Isaiah. xl. 25. xli. 5.

heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him.

*Artemon.* You may be assured, that whatever meaning is to be put upon these words, St. Paul had no design in them of asserting that Christ was God; because in the verse immediately before he styles him, *the image of the invisible God*: i. e. he declares him not to be the invisible God, but a resemblance of him, one of the most dignified of his creatures, who had the honour to be made most like unto him. For whatever is not God, must be a creature. There is nothing between.

Moreover it is utterly impossible that our apostle should here ascribe the creation of the world to Christ, for the two following reasons; first; because no pious jew could believe there were two creators; but that it was one single person, Jehovah, who was the sole creator of all things. For this is an idea that runs through the whole bible, whilst the doctrine is thus most expressly laid down on particular occasions: "*O Lord God of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims! Thou art God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. Is. xxxvii. 16. Thus saith the LORD, the holy one of Israel, and his Maker; I have made the earth and*  
*created*

created man upon it : I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens." Is. xlv. 11, 12, &c.

Secondly ; St. Paul, in his sermon at Athens, tells them (Acts xvii.) that " God, who made the world, and all things therein : HE, that single person, and no other, had appointed the man, Christ Jesus, to be the judge of mankind under himself, at some future day." It is impossible that any thing should be more distinguished and different from God, the maker of the world, than Christ is here marked to be.

*Eusebes.* You have satisfied me, that St. Paul never believed, and therefore could never intend to say, (a) that Christ was the creator of the world. But as he here says, that *by him all things were*

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*created,*

(a) It may be thought that there is a text omitted by Eusebes, that overturns all this reasoning, and shews, that, our apostle, whatever self-contradiction there might be in it, actually asserted Jesus Christ to be the creator of all things. It is in *Ephesians* iii. 9. where he treats of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ. But it is to be observed, that the words *by Jesus Christ*, are wanting in the best manuscripts, and ancient versions of the N. T. neither are they found in Tertullian, Jerom, Ambrose, &c. and are rejected by Mill, Bengelius, and Westein ; and therefore should not be put in our Bibles, as part of St. Paul's writings.

*created, &c.* I desire to know what it is that I am to understand by the words he here uses?

*Artemon.* You are to observe, that St. Paul is writing to a church or congregation of christians, consisting of jews in part, but principally of heathen idolaters, in whom a mighty change had been wrought by their having been brought to the knowlege of the gospel; which our apostle expresses after his manner in strong figurative language, viz. ver. 13. *that God had delivered them from the power of darkness, and had translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son*; i. e. brought them out of a state of ignorance and depravity to the knowledge of the gospel of Christ; and that ver. 14. *in him they had redemption (or deliverance) through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*: i. e. they had an assurance of the divine pardon and acceptance for ever (for that is the full meaning of this gospel-phrase, *the forgiveness of sins*,) *by the blood of Christ*, i. e. by his death, by which he confirmed the truth of the doctrine he taught, concerning the divine mercy and benignity. After this, ver. 15. he goes on to raise and exalt their ideas of Christ; calling him, *the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: the image of the invisible God*, because the wisdom, power, and goodness of God were manifested by him, and seen in him: *the first-born, the chief, of every creature*, as the first-born is the chief or head of the family; *of every creature*, i. e. of all mankind, jews and gentiles,



tiles, now united together as one people, and become new creatures or a (a) new creation. After which, our apostle's imagination catching flame, as it were, at the idea of the christian world being a new moral and spiritual creation, he goes on after his wonted fine rhetorical manner, to amplify and recommend the character of Christ, as the author of this new creation, as if every being in the universe took part in it, and was affected by it; for *by him*, proceeds the apostle, *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, &c.*

*Eusebes.* Have you any precedent or example to produce from any other part of the scriptures, for speaking of the new establishment of things by Jesus Christ, the reformation of mankind by his gospel, in such a magnificent stile, as if heaven and earth were changed and created anew by it?

*Artemon.* Yes: there is an example so much to the point, in the book of the prophet Isaiah, that it is not unlikely but our apostle might borrow his language from him. For that lofty animated prophet, treating beforehand of the happy effects of the gospel, introduces the Almighty Being declaring; "*Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth;*

(a) In another place, St. Paul stiles christians new creatures; *If any man be in Christ, (i. e. a christian) he is a new creature. Old things are past away; behold*

ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW. 2 COR. V. 17.

earth; and the former ones shall not be remembered, neither shall they be brought to mind any more. But ye shall rejoice and exult in the age to come, which I create (a)." If. lxx. 17, 18.

Eusebes. There is another passage, at the entrance of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which St. Paul speaks of *the worlds being made by Christ*. I am thoroughly satisfied from the arguments you have alleged, that the apostle did not believe, and therefore did never intend to call Christ, the creator of the world: but I shall be glad to know how you explain his meaning in this place, where he says; *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his (viz. God's) power, &c.* Heb. i. 1, 2, 3.

Artemon. I hope that now, in no long time, all christians will come to see, as you do, that there is but one only true God, and creator of all things; and that Jesus Christ, and all other beings depend upon him for all things, and are such only to us as he makes them to be. In this passage of St. Paul, (Heb. i. 1, 2.) of which you are desirous to have a solution,

(a) See Bp. Lowth's most valuable translation; which I have all along cited.

solution, you are to know, that our english translation does not give the proper meaning of the apostle's words, which should be rendered, *for whom he made the ages*, and not, *by whom he made the worlds*. For *δις*, *for whom*, is equally agreeable to the original greek. And the word *αιωνας*, *eons*, which we translate *worlds*, properly signifies *ages*, or fixed periods of time, in which certain things are done. In reference to which, the time, or times of the law, or of God's dispensation to the Israelites under Moses, is peculiarly called *the age*, *αιων*, *eon*; or *ages*, *αιωνες*, *eons*, by our Saviour and the writers (a) of the New Testament. Thus at taking his final leave of his disciples, (Matt. xxviii. 20.) *Jesus said*; not, *lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the WORLD*, as in our common translation; but, *lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the AGE*, *τε αιωνος*, of the *eon*; i. e. of the jewish age; as Bishop Pearce well renders and paraphrases

(a) See Locke on 1 Cor. ii. 7. Bishop Pearce well translates Matt. xxiv. 3. not, *the end of the WORLD*, but *the end of the AGE*, i. e. "of the age, during which the jewish church and state was to last." And Joh. ix. 32. not *since the world began*; but *ex τε αιωνος*, from the *eon*, from the *age*; i. e. from the beginning of the time that the law of Moses has subsisted, there are no records of any one thus miraculously opening the eyes of any one that was born blind. See also that valuable commentator, on Acts iii. 21.

paraphrases it. And St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 11. speaking of the Almighty's former visitations of the Israelites for their wickedness, says; *Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and were written for our admonition: not, upon whom the ends of the WORLD are come*, as we now translate it; for St. Paul had no such thing in his thoughts; but, *upon whom the ends of the AGES are come*, τὸν αἰῶνα, of the *cons*; the ends of the times of the law; i. e. who live under the gospel dispensation. Hence we may conclude, that it was at that time well understood, and a familiar way of speaking with the jews, to call the time of the Mosaic dispensation, *the age*, or *ages*; and most probably was borrowed, as Mr. Locke observes, from the circumstance of their counting by ages, jubilees, periods of fifty years. In agreement with this stile of speech, and much in confirmation of the construction here put upon the apostle's words, Almighty God, by the prophet Isaiah, calls the future times of the Messiah, (as just now cited by me) *the age to come, which I create*, Isa. lxv. 18. And in like manner, by the same prophet, Christ is foretold to be (ix. 6.) *the Father of (a) the age to come*, i. e. the person who  
was

(a) Surely it is high time to correct that known false reading, and most glaring self-contradiction in our english bibles, in this famous prophecy of Isaiah ix. 6. In which, Christ, who is spoken of expressly  
in



Was to begin that future age ; or, in our apostle's words, he, for whom God made or created the ages ; with respect to whom he disposed or constituted his several extraordinary dispensations to mankind, and their different periods.

*Eusebes.*

in the very place, *as a child to be born* at some future time, is nevertheless stiled *the everlasting Father*, instead of *the Father of the age to come*. It is not sufficient that learned men know this perversion of the sacred text. It should be made plain and evident to all ; as we find ignorant christians of all ranks, the highest as well as the lowest, continually misled by it to dark and debasing notions of the eternal unchangeable God. Is it to be wondered that many reject a revelation which is supposed to authorize such descriptions of the Deity as the following?

“ *This Infant is the mighty God,*

“ *Come to be suckl'd and ador'd ;*

“ *Th' Eternal Father, Prince of Peace,*

“ *The Son of David, and his Lord,*”

*Watts, Hymn xiii. Book 1.*

How much is it to be regretted, that this worthy author did not revise and purge his hymns before his death ; if he did intend it, as some say he did !

N. B. From the third appendix to the life of Dr. Watts by Dr. Johnson, with notes by Samuel Palmer, 1791. it appears, that Dr. Watts was sensible that his hymns needed amendment in some important points ; but was withheld by weak and unworthy fears from undertaking the work.

*Eusebes.* But does not our apostle, soon after, in this epistle to the hebrews, cite a passage from the scriptures of the Old Testament, in which Christ is expressly stiled God ; where we read thus, *unto the Son he saith ; thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Heb. i. 8.

*Artemon.* It is well known, Eusebes, to the learned, that this passage, which is taken from Psalm xlv. 6. may with equal propriety, be translated ; *God is thy throne for ever and ever.* And the lxx. greek translation rather favours this construction. To which I would add, ~~that~~ as the person here spoken of, is, in the next verse, declared to be honoured and exalted for his eminent virtue and love of righteousness by God, *his* God, to whom he owed every thing, it is more natural and fitting to understand the words in this sense, which they will justly and properly bear ; and not to consider them as addressed to Christ as a God ; because it is not the stile of the scriptures so to address any being but the only true God.

## INQUIRY XI.

*Of the doctrine of the apostles, James, and Peter, concerning God and Christ.*

*Eusebes.* Is there any thing in the other writings of the apostles, that can induce us to imagine that they supposed their great master, Jesus, to be the  
most

most high God ; or that there was any other God, but the Father only ?

*Artemon.* In the epistles of James, and Peter, there is certainly nothing of the kind to be found (a)  
For

(a) I was much surpris'd to observe bishop Hurd, in his newly published discourses, citing the apostle Peter for holding forth the doctrine of *Three Divine Persons, who are ineffably one God*, and commending him for *accurately distinguishing the respective offices* of these Three Divine Persons : because the authority of men of his character and rank in the church of which he is a member, is apt to weigh much more than it ought to do with many, who will not judge for themselves. It does not, however, look well in persons who are advancing things *strange to natural reason*, as his lordship terms this doctrine, to endeavour to depreciate that natural light, which comes from God, as much as any supernatural one. But it is more blameable when holy scripture is wrongly and carelessly quoted for such a purpose, as is done by the bishop on this occasion. For he should have known, that when St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*, our english version is wrong ; and it ought to have been rendered *the sensual man*, as the same word, *ψυχικός*, is translated, James iii. 17. And also when our Saviour tells his apostles, John xiv. 17, *that the world cannot receive the spirit of truth*, &c. it was easy to see that he means only the corrupt mass of mankind.

In

For in James i. 27. iii. 9. it is plainly and expressly intimated that there is no God but the Father: *Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, &c.* And *Therewith bleſs we God, even the Father.* And it is asserted, ii. 19. that *there is only one God*: But if Jesus Christ were God, there would be *two Gods*. And 1 Peter i. 3. God is called the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; and

In both cases are to be understood, not as the bishop supposes, those who make use of their natural reason, but those who neglected to use it. "On this assurance " then," says his lordship, (but in which he is wholly unsupported by the authority on which it is built,) " we may *reasonably* believe what by *reason* we cannot understand. And the substance of what we " are to believe on this whole subject, is contained in " a single text of St. Peter, where *the Three Divine " Persons, yet ineffably one God, the Trinity in Unity, " whom we adore, and their respective offices, are accurately distinguished.* For in the opening of his " first epistle, he pronounces the christians, to whom " he writes, *elect*, that is, entitled to salvation, according to the foreknowledge and predetermination of " God the Father, through the sanctification of the " spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of " Jesus Christ." Bishop Hurd's sermons, vol. ii. 311, 312, 313. It would be difficult for any one to find out *three persons, who are one God*, in these words of the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 2. unless he came prepared and



and ver. 21. Christ is expressly contradistinguished from God, by the attributes of a dependant mortal creature being given to him, in that he died, and

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had

and resolved to put such a construction upon them. For there is no other person mentioned as God, but the Father: and whether by *the sanctification of the spirit* in consequence of the election of those christians to whom he writes, be understood their being happily distinguished and separated from the rest of the world, by embracing the doctrine which was confirmed by the extraordinary gifts of the spirit of God; or, the salutary effects wrought in their hearts' and lives by the gospel, which was dictated by the same spirit; either way, we have no new divine person named, that can be called God; nothing but the power of God. And if *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* be spoken in allusion to Exod. xxiv. 7, 8, and applied to the blessings of the christian covenant, the pardon of sin unto eternal life by the gospel, which Jesus Christ sealed by the shedding of his blood, or confirmed by dying in attestation of it: be it in this, or in any other sense that the words are to be understood, still we have no other Divine Person that can either be called God, or a person or part of the one God. We may not scruple farther to pronounce, that the apostle Peter is much injured by this misrepresentation of his sentiments concerning God and Christ. For upon one occasion we find this fervent apostle receiving high commendations from his Divine master,

Jesus,

had his life restored to him after death. But God cannot die, or be restored to life. The expressions are very strong, and intended to mark that every thing, even under the christian dispensation, comes from God, and is to be acknowledged as such: "*By Christ, says he, ye do believe, or are brought to believe, in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*" To make an end of citations: the genuine sentiments of this apostle, that there is but one God, who is to be honoured and acknowledged by christians, and that Jesus Christ is not God, but his minister and messenger to mankind; fully appear by that doxology at the conclusion of this epistle, viz. *The God of all favour, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile*

Jesus, for his honest confession, in *owning him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God*; (Matt. xvi. 13---17) when almost all others disowned him in that character. But will the bishop say, that Christ can be Son of the living God, and the living God himself, at one and the same time; And if he be the Son of the living God, that is, received his being from him, how can he be equal to the living God the Father, from whom he received his being? See also Peter's declaration of his sentiments concerning God and Christ, very different from those his lordship would fix upon him, in Acts ii. 22, to 37; iii. 13. 22; iv. 24, 27.

*awhile, make you perfect, strengthen, stablish you.  
To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*  
1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

## INQUIRY XII.

*Of the doctrine of the apostle John, in his epistles,  
concerning God and Christ?*

*Eusebès.* I BEG to know, Artemon, what I am to make of that singular text, 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:* Does it not, as it now stands, countenance the strange opinion of God dying for us?

*Artemon.* You might call it not only a strange, but a shocking opinion. The scriptures however are quite clear of the imputation of favouring any thing of this kind. And in the text you have quoted, the words [*of God,*] are not found in any ancient copies of the New Testament, except one of no credit. They also are discarded by three of the most learned inquirers into these subjects, Mill, Westein, and Bengelius. I find them not in the French translations of Martin, or of L'Enfant and Beaufobre. And they ought not to be suffered any longer to have a place in our english bibles; because they were not the words of the apostle; and because whilst they remain a part of the scripture, they do great mischief, by instilling unbecoming sentiments of Almighty God into the minds of christians;

and false opinions concerning Jesus Christ, as if he were really God.

*Eusebes.* You must now give me leave to ask your opinion concerning that famous text in this first epistle of John, which speaks of three Divine Persons being one, in such plain terms; where the apostle says, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are One. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.* 1 John v. 7, 8. Are not we here taught that the Son and holy Spirit are one God with the Father?

*Artemon.* If the part of this verse, that seems to countenance such a notion, were genuine, it would not prove that the *Three* here mentioned are *one* God, For it is not said *these three are* [*us, unus*] one intelligent being, *one Person*; but *us, one thing*; i. e. one and the same *testimony*. But the truth is, the passage is not of the writing of St. John, but crept into some latin manuscripts of the New Testament in later times, and has been thence falsely ascribed to him by the over-great zeal of some persons, who were glad to have him a patron of their favourite doctrine of the Trinity. For the words (*in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are One. And there are three that bear witness on earth*) have never been proved to be found in the text of any greek manuscript, before the invention



tion of printing: nor in the text of any ancient version; nor were cited by any of the numerous writers in the whole Arian controversy in the fourth century; and were wanting in all the latin copies both before and long after Cyprian's time. They ought therefore to be erased out of our bibles. In the first *english* bibles after the reformation, in the time of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. these suspected words were honestly printed differently from the rest, to signify that they were wanting in the original; which distinction was afterwards neglected, but ought to have been (*a*) kept up, to prevent the nation being imposed upon, and misled in a point of such great moment. And the sense of the apostle is very complete (*b*) without this

(*a*) It ought to be mentioned to the credit of the author of *A New Translation of the New Testament, extracted from the paraphrase of Dr. Doddridge, 1765*; that he has marked these words as not being those of the apostle; and has also left out the words of *God*, in 1 John iii. 16. They are also both left out in an edition of the New Testament in greek and english, printed for Roberts, 1729; and perhaps in others that I have not seen.

(*b*) This explanation is Dr. *Clark's*; See *Scripture Doctrine*, p. 231. But some may be pleased with Dr. *Lardner's* explanation of this obscure passage, 1 Joh. v. 5, 10, as more agreeing with the apostle's stile and manner.

this addition, as we find his words given us in all the greek manuscripts and antient translations of the New Testament, ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* ver. 6. *This is he that came* (i. e. was declared and manifested to be the Son of God) *by water and blood* (i. e. *by water*, at his baptism, when there came a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son : and *by blood*, i. e. by his death and resurrection :) — *And it is the spirit* (i. e. the gifts of the holy spirit, and the power of miracles

manner. “ To me, it seems, (says he) that the *water*, an emblem of purity, (Ezek. xxxvi. 25.) denotes the innocence of our Lord’s life, which was without spot, exemplary ; and the reasonableness, excellence, and perfection of his doctrine, which after the strictest examination, and nicest scrutiny, cannot be charged with any error or falsehood. The *blood* denotes our Lord’s willing and patient, though painful and ignominious death ; the utmost testimony that can be given of integrity. The *spirit* intends our Lord’s many miraculous works, wrought by the spirit, the finger, the power of God, or God himself. This testimony is *truth*, that is exceeding true, so that it may be relied upon. For it is unquestionable, and cannot be gainsaid. See John v. 32, 37, x. 25. Acts ii. 22. Here are three witnesses. And *they agree in one*. They are harmonious, all saying the same thing, and concurring in the same testimony.” *Lardner’s Letter on the Logos, &c.* p. 164, 165.

miracles granted to the apostles) *that beareth witness; because the spirit is truth, (ver. 7.) For there are three that bear record; the spirit, the water, and the blood; and those three agree in one: or, as some ancient writers read the text; these three are one, viz. one testimony, that Jesus is the Son of God.*

*Eusebes.* Is there not one other passage in this epistle, from which some have argued that Christ is to be considered as the true God?

*Artemon.* The 20th verse of the fifth chapter, has by later christians had this meaning put upon it, which was never thought of in the first ages of the gospel. Nor would any since have given into such an interpretation, had they considered the words and their connection, without prejudice. For it is of God, (a) the Father only, that the apostle speaks, when he says; (1 John v. 20.) *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is True, or rather, may know the True God, τὸν ἀληθινόν θεόν.* (So the most and best manuscripts have it, in like manner as John xvii. 3. The apostle proceeds). *And we are in him that is True by his Son, Jesus Christ; that is, in the True God; for so the construction manifestly requires it to be understood of the same person as before. He then concludes; This is the True God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. The*  
meaning

(a) See Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine, &c. p. 54, 55.

meaning is ; this is the true God, and the way that leads to him ; the true religion, and way to eternal life, viz. the worship of the true God according to the directions, or as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Beware of idol-worship.

*Eusebes.* In the last book of the New Testament, I find Almighty God introduced, and speaking concerning himself ; (Revel. i. 8.) *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.* A little after however, (ver. 11.) Jesus Christ is brought in, and says ; *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ;* and again, ver. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth and was dead :* Are not here the same titles given to Jesus Christ as to Almighty God ? Must not he therefore be some way or other, the Almighty God ?

*Artemon.* What great necessity is there, Eusebes, for a new translation of the Bible ? That part of the eleventh verse, [*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ; and*] is known, and acknowledged by all learned men, not to be the writing of the apostle, being not found in the most and the best manuscripts, or in the antient versions of the New Testament ; and is therefore justly left out of several editions of the greek Testament. The words then ought not to be retained in our english bibles. As to ver. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last, and I am he that liveth and was dead.* It is plain these words cannot be spoken of God, but of a creature, who was made subject to death and mortality



mortality. If men made any use of their understanding, they must see that such things can never be ascribed to the *living and true God*.

*Eusebes*. There remains only one passage more, Artemon, relating to our Saviour Christ, concerning which I am desirous to have your sentiments. It is in *Revelation* ii. 23, where Christ is ushered in speaking concerning himself; "*All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the heart, and the reins*. Does not this seem to imply that the person who speaks is the omniscient being, is God: for it is the peculiar attribute of God to know the heart?

*Artemon*. A little attention will convince you, Eusebes, that nothing of this sort will be found to be deducible from our Saviour's language in this place. For you must consider it in connection with other parts of his character, and the account which the writer of this book gives of him. Now St. John thus prefaces his work: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass*." From which it is evident, that the book contains a revelation, or discovery of such things as Jesus did not know of himself, but had them communicated to him from Almighty God. And consequently, this *searching of the heart and reins*, which he attributes to himself, must be such a degree of knowledge of what related to those apostolic churches,

as was imparted to him in that first age of our religion, when it was thought proper that an extraordinary Divine Power should be exerted in the direction and government of the infant christian church; and in this latitude, and no farther, it is to be understood. With the same restriction we are to take the apostle Peter's reply to his divine master; (John xxi. 17.) *Lord, thou knowest ALL things; thou knowest that I love thee.* He only meant, that by the great power he had received from God, the Lord Jesus was acquainted with the secret thoughts and dispositions of those he conversed with, and especially of himself and his fellow apostles. This interpretation is illustrated and confirmed by those words of the apostle John, to the persons to whom he sent his first epistle; *ye have an unction from the Holy one, and ye know ALL things.* 1 John ii. 20. None will imagine him to intend to describe these christians as gods, omniscient. What he therein tells them is, that they had the full knowlege of the christian doctrine divinely communicated to them; especially in what related to the persons he had immediately before been speaking of; whose grievous errors concerning Christ, he specifies immediately after; ver. 21. 22.

## INQUIRY

## INQUIRY XIII.

*Of the sentiment and doctrine of Christ and his Apostles,  
concerning the Spirit, or Holy Spirit.*

*Eusebes.* You have convinced me that our Saviour Christ never intimated, in the least degree, that he was the most high God; and that neither his apostles, nor the evangelists ever taught any thing of the kind; but, the contrary. I must now beg leave to trouble you with my inquiries, what it is that the scriptures really teach concerning the *Spirit, or holy Spirit*. For many christians look upon this to be God, the most high God, equal to the Father; and accordingly pray to him and worship him. Do our Saviour and his apostles teach that there is any such person who is God, and to be worshiped by us?

*Artemon.* Our Saviour and his apostles appear utterly unacquainted with any God, or Divine Person, called the Spirit, or holy Spirit, distinct from the heavenly Father of all, whom they stile the only true God.

*Eusebes.* Upon what grounds do you say this?

*Artemon.* Upon this sure ground, that we never find that either Christ or his apostles either prayed  
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themselves, or directed others to pray and give thanks, or pay any religious acknowledgements to any such Divine Person, called the Spirit, the holy Spirit, as they do to God, the Father, continually; and which assuredly they would not have neglected here, had there been any such person who was God, equal to the Father. And moreover, although they make mention of the gifts of the Spirit, these gifts are never described as asked of, or given by the Spirit; which unquestionably would have been at least sometimes done, had there been any such person, (a) who was God, and equally with the Father, to be acknowledged and worshiped.

*Eusebes.* But does not Christ speak of *blasphemy against the holy Spirit*, as a sin never to be forgiven? And does not this argue, that he must be God, against whom this sin is said to be committed?

*Artemon.*

(a) "Some things in the prescribed form of Ordination of priests and deacons, in the church of England, he did not approve, and could not use; particularly the hymn;

"Come holy Ghost, eternal God,

"Proceeding from above, &c."

Memoirs of the life of Dr. Sam. Clarke,  
by Mr. Emlyn, p. 493.



*Artemon.* The passage you allude to is in Matthew xii. 31, 32. and runs thus, “ *Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men; and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven: but whosoever speaketh against the holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*” You here perceive that there is no such language used as that of *sin against the holy Spirit*; but only *blasphemy of the Spirit*, or speaking against the holy Spirit. And it is evident, that our Saviour, by the Spirit, or holy Spirit, here mentioned by him, meant only that divine power, by which he was enabled to work the miracle which was here cavilled at. For by comparing the parallel accounts of the same transaction by St. Matthew and St. Luke; [Matth. xii. 28. *But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God, is come unto you:* Luke xi. 20. *But if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you:*] you find that what the former calls *the Spirit of God*, the other calls *the finger of God*. From which it is obvious, that it is not any Divine Person that is here called the Spirit of God, but that it is only the finger or power of God, which is so termed; that power, by which Christ was enabled to do his miraculous works.

And the great sin of these Jews, called *the blasphemy of the Spirit*, or *speaking against the holy Spirit*, lay in this ; that though they could not deny the miraculous cure wrought by Jesus upon the demoniac, they insisted on it being done by a communication with Belzebub, the prince of demons, and not by any power from God : which shewed their obstinate and incorrigible wickedness, and that they were incapable of forgiveness, because incapable of repentance, whilst such dispositions remained in them.

*Euzebes.* Is the Spirit, or holy Spirit, in other places of scripture, to be understood of an extraordinary power, and gift, or gifts from God ; and not as being a Divine Person, or intelligent agent ?

*Artemon.* Yes : it is very generally so to be understood ; especially in the writings of the New Testament. Thus our Saviour encourages his apostles, Matth. x. 19, 20. *When they deliver you up (to be judged for the gospel sake) be not anxious how or what ye shall speak ; for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* St. Mark and Luke, in the parallel places, call it *the holy Spirit*. All of them doubtless thereby intended the Divine influence. Thus also it is said of Christ himself, John iii. 34. *He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.*

Sometimes

Sometimes it signifies those particular extraordinary gifts which were predicted and promised by Christ, and bestowed upon the apostles and first christians, after his resurrection. Thus after our Saviour had spoken in highly figurative terms, borrowed from their ancient prophets, of some great blessings which his followers were to derive from him: the sacred historian remarks upon it; (John vii. 39.) *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* Here it is obvious, that the *Spirit*, or *holy Spirit*, stands for those extraordinary divine gifts or powers, that were afterwards bestowed on the followers of Christ.

*Eusebes.* But do not the terms in which our Saviour mentions the extraordinary aids which would be given to his followers, plainly bespeak the holy Spirit to be a real person, though inferior to Christ, as one sent by him, and in some measure put under his direction? As for instance, where he says, John xiv. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* And xvi. 7, &c. *It is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you but*

ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

*Artemon.* Every one must interpret and judge for himself in these matters. And so long as he looks upon the Spirit to be an inferior agent, employed by God, and not the most high God; there can be nothing contradictory to the other parts of scripture, to suppose it to be a person really existing. But the contrary sentiment is more agreeable to the general tenor of the scriptures, and the stile in which they are written, to consider the *spirit of truth* here as personified, represented as a person, by a very usual figure of speech, in the sacred, and in other writers. Thus, as I have had occasion to mention to you before in the course of our conversation, in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, to inculcate the belief of an all-wise providence, by which the world was first made, and all things are governed; *Wisdom* is introduced as a *Divine Person*, and described, as dwelling and conversing with God from all eternity, and particularly engaged and concerned in the creation of this world of ours, and in the affairs of mankind. St. Paul also, 1 Cor. xiii. holds forth *Charity*, or benevolence, with the attributes of a person really existing and acting. And in the same way



way our Saviour, in the words which you have just now quoted, very naturally tells his sorrowful and dejected disciples, that the extraordinary assistance that would be given them after his departure from them, would be as it were, another Comforter or Advocate to them in his stead, who would plead their cause and be always with them ; by whom they would be the more fully confirmed in the belief of those things which they had heard from him, and would have many of their prejudices removed, which threw a mist before their eyes, whilst he was in person with them ; and the success of his gospel be effectually promoted ; which he calls his being glorified by the spirit. There is a beauty and energy in this animated style of description far beyond that of a plainer narrative : nor would it be easy to mistake it, if men did not come to the reading of the scriptures with a wrong bias on their minds, to which they bend every thing they meet with.

This interpretation is confirmed, as has been often observed, by the evangelist St. Luke, in his book of *The Acts* ; in which he records the fulfilment of this promise of our Saviour's, of sending the Comforter, the holy Spirit, to his disciples. For there we find no new powerful intelligent agent, or real divine person, introduced ; but only a plentiful effusion of miraculous gifts bestowed upon the apostles. And there is additional strength given to this interpretation, from *the holy spirit* being the common

common phrase by which christians spoke of these extraordinary divine powers, which were in the first age conferred upon them in great abundance. Thus the apostle Peter, vindicating the calling of the gentiles to the knowlege of the gospel, without being made subject to the law of Moses; says, *Acts xv. 8. God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the holy Spirit, even as he did unto us.* And *Acts xix. 2. Paul said unto them; have ye received the holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him; we have not so much as heard whether there be any holy Spirit.* In all these instances none can doubt but that by the *holy Spirit* is meant those miraculous gifts then bestowed on believers of the gospel. But see *The Acts* throughout.

*Eusebes.* But how, I pray, am I to interpret that language of St. Peter, where he seems expressly to stile the holy Spirit, God? It is in *Acts v. 3.* where the apostle is mentioned, as saying to the man, who pretended he had given in his whole substance to the common stock, whilst he kept back part of it; "*Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?—thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*"

*Artemon.* Nothing but the force of strong early prejudice in favour of the doctrine learnt in your childhood, could ever make you or any sensible person entertain the most distant thought that there was another God, called the holy Spirit, or holy Ghost,  
here

here spoken of, distinct and different from the one living and true God, the Father : whom the uniform language of the holy scriptures throughout proclaimeth to be the only true God, and no other person whatever to be in any way equal or like unto him. There is no difficulty in comprehending that Ananias might be said by lying to the holy Spirit to lie to God himself ; since by endeavouring to pass a fraud upon the apostles, who acted by a divine extraordinary power, amounted to the same as endeavouring to impose upon God himself, from whom they received that power, and whose ministers they were. So Luke x. 16. our Lord says to his apostles ; “ *He that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* ” Now although he that despised the apostles, despised not only Christ, but God himself ; it did not hence follow, that Christ was God, or that his apostles were Gods.

*Eusebes.* May I ask you, Artemon, in what way you interpret that pious conclusion of one of St. Paul’s epistles ; (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) *The grace (or favour) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Spirit, be with you all ?* Is not the holy Spirit put there upon the same rank with God himself ; and said to communicate blessings to christians ?

*Artemon.* You well know, Eusebes, that it is by no means to be inferred from things or persons  
being

being coupled in this manner together, that they are therefore all of the same kind or rank : for if so, you might conclude that the angels were Gods, from that passage in 1 Tim. v. 21. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels; and so on.* The apostle here, by saying, *the communion of the holy spirit be with you,* intends only to express a devout wish, that they to whom he writes might be partakers of the extraordinary gifts, and of all the blessings of the gospel.

*Eusebes.* I am often at a loss how to understand that exhortation of the apostle, Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* Does it not imply that the holy Spirit is a distinct divine person, who takes an interested part in the affairs of man's salvation?

*Artemon.* You will find it very easy and intelligible, without recurring to such strange and groundless suppositions, by taking this along with you in your interpretation of it; viz. that the Spirit, or holy Spirit of God, is sometimes put for God himself; as the spirit of a man signifies the man himself. This is taught by St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 11. when he observes; *what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.* This exhortation then, of *not grieving the holy Spirit of God,* is to be understood, of not grieving the Almighty Being himself, who had  
sealed,



*sealed, &c.* i. e. had favoured these Ephesian christians with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. And to him it is they were not to give concern, by their improper behaviour and mismanagement of his gifts. The very same phrase is used by the prophet Isaiah, as expressive of the most compassionate regards of Almighty God for his people Israel: when speaking of their great wickedness, he says; *they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit*, Isaiah lxiii. 10.

Or, perhaps, you may not dislike this other interpretation; viz. that the holy Spirit, which they were not to grieve, is put for persons who were endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. As when St. Paul says; Acts xx. 23. *The holy Spirit witnesseth in every city; saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me*; he means it of persons who had the holy Spirit, to whom an extraordinary divine revelation had been made of the sufferings he was to undergo for the sake of the gospel. So here likewise, (and it admirably suits the connection of the apostle's discourse with what goes before and follows after,) he is to be understood as saying; "Grieve not, by your light conversation or dissensions, those good men, who labour for your salvation: for which service they have the extraordinary gifts and assistance of the spirit of God bestowed upon them."

*Eusebes.* I shall trouble you with but one question more on this matter, and that is, to know at what time it was, that christians first began publicly

licly to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a distinct God, and object of worship; which you have proved to me to have no authority or support from the word of God?

*Artemon.* It is a fact of great notoriety, that the Holy Spirit was not publicly acknowledged as God, and to be worshiped as such, for the first three hundred years after Christ. It is also remarkable, that at the famous council of Nice, in the year 325, all that was inserted about the holy Spirit, was barely, "I believe in the holy Spirit." That which makes the principal part of the Nicene Creed now, relating to the Holy Spirit, did not originally belong to it, but was added about half a century afterwards, in the second general council, as it is called, of Constantinople. The words then added after "I believe in the Holy Ghost" were these, "The Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together, is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." So that there is no colour of foundation in the holy scripture for the belief of any person called the Spirit, or holy Spirit, as being God: and the worship of this Spirit, as a Divine Person, did not become publicly authorized among christians, 'till they were sinking into the very dregs of pagan idolatry. For, about this period, that is, at the latter end of the fourth century, came in the worship

ship of dead men and women, called Saints; and the worship of their bones, hair, garments, and other things belonging to them, called *relics*.

## INQUIRY XIV.

*Of the origin of the very early and lasting errors among christians, concerning God and Christ.*

*Eusebes.* I AM highly obliged to you, Artemon, for the satisfaction you have given me in all my questions and doubts that I have proposed to you. You have demonstrated to me, from the sacred writings, and the words of Christ and his apostles in particular; that there is no other person who is God, but the Father only. If it would not detain you too long, I would beg the favour of you, before we part, to set my mind at rest a little, by acquainting me, how it came to pass; by what steps and degrees it was, that the whole christian world fell away from this knowlege and adoration of the one only and true God, the Father, and joined two other persons with him, whom they called God the Son, and God the holy Ghost, or holy Spirit; each of whom they looked upon as equally God with the Father, and equally to be adored by them?

*Artemon.* You must not mistake here, Eusebes. All christians did not decline from the worship of the one living and true God, the Father, to the worship of two other persons, who were not Gods.

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The jews, who in no small number at first embraced christianity, (a) never departed from the doctrine of the Divine Unity, but preserved it pure and uncorrupt, whilst they were suffered to remain in their own country; and afterwards carried it along with them into other countries, where they were dispersed. These early jewish christians, who were such strict Unitarians, might have been a means of keeping the heathens, that in such great numbers were converted to the gospel, steady in this most important article, if they had been upon good terms with each other. And this was a point which St. Paul had much at heart, and laboured most earnestly

(a) Ancients and moderns bear testimony to the stedfast adherence of these jewish christians to the doctrine of the Divine Unity, although some of these christian writers, who had degenerated from this great truth themselves, are pleased to call that an error, which was taught by Moses first, and afterwards by Jesus and his apostles. See Beausobre Hist. de Manich. tom. ii. p. 517. where he quotes the famous Athanasius, relating, "*that in the time of the apostles, the jews were in this error, and drew the gentiles into it; viz. that Christ is only a mere man, and not God; and that the word was not flesh*"; meaning, we may suppose, by the last clause, that these early jewish believers did not consider the word, the logos, in the beginning of John's gospel, as a name of Christ, but an attribute of God himself.



earnestly to promote; as every one must have observed who is acquainted with his history, and reads his epistles.

*Eusebes.* What might it be that made the jewish and heathen converts not unite so cordially with each other?

*Artemon.* The jewish christians could not be brought to give up at once their old religious customs; which is not to be wondered at, as they had had the sanction of divine authority for them, tho' that authority was superseded by the gospel; but they continued to observe distinctions of days, and meats, and the like, which unavoidably kept them at an unsocial distance from other christians, who paid no regard to these things. And St. Paul, though he thought such an attachment a weakness, yet did he not condemn it as sinful in his countrymen, so long as they did not impose such observances on others, nor make them necessary to salvation.

*Eusebes.* Was there any thing else that kept them asunder from each other?

*Artemon.* The jewish christians being poor, through the troubles and distresses of their country, which ended in its utter destruction; and being also in general unskilled in philosophy and the learning of the times, were too much despised and undervalued by the learned heathen converts, who paid little regard to their sentiments, and took the lead in every thing.

*Eusebes.* How high can you trace the beginning of this corruption of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ?

*Artemon.* The first appearance of it was in the very days of the apostles, and took its rise from the heathen converts chiefly, and some few perhaps of the jews mixed with them, who were tinged with their learning and philosophy.

*Eusebes.* What might it be that gave immediate occasion to their deviation from the doctrine of the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ?

*Artemon.* Certain philosophical notions of theirs, mixed with vanity and worldly prejudices, made them unwilling to believe, and ashamed to own, that the founder of their religion was a mortal man, who suffered an ignominious and painful death upon a cross: and therefore they persuaded themselves, and maintained, that he was not a man in reality, nor suffered in reality, but in appearance only.

*Eusebes.* Where is there any mention made in the New Testament of this strange perversion of the truth concerning Christ?

*Artemon.* St. Paul appears to have had a foresight of these errors before they had grown to any great height, and gave faithful warning of them, in his frequent cautions concerning their subtle, endless disputes and speculations of the platonic, or rather oriental philosophy, relating to the Deity, and the different emanations from him. *Beware,* (says he) Coloss,

Coloss. ii. 8, 9.) lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead, (rather of the divine power) *bodily*. And 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called. Which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. You will do well also to consult 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, Tit. iii. 9. But the apostle John lived to see these errors spring up, and bear much bitter fruit. It is the obvious main design of his two first epistles, which were written when he was far advanced in years, to censure and bear testimony against certain christians, who denied Jesus Christ to be (a) come in flesh; (b) that is,

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would

(a) The Manichean christians, who fell into great errors, are known to have drank deep of this in particular; so as to have denied Christ to have had any human nature at all. Ambrose, speaking of these men, by way of reproof, says, “cum Manichæus adoraverit, quem in carne venisse non credidit.” i. e. they worshiped Christ, though they did not believe him to have come in flesh; to have been a man. This shews how the ancients understood the phrase of Christ coming in flesh; namely, of his being really a man, See Lardner’s Credibility, part 2. vol. vi. p. 276.

(b) Perhaps the apostle’s words might be thus more properly,

would not allow Christ to have been really a man ; but one in appearance only. You cannot but perceive how offensive such a doctrine must be to the venerable apostle, who, in perfect agreement with the other apostles and evangelists, constantly speaks of Christ as a man, liable to sufferings and death, as others were ; and describes the ill treatment and opposition he met with in the cause of divine truth, especially

properly given in english ; that these men did not confess, or denied, that Jesus, who came in flesh, was the Christ. For this, see a letter of Limborch to Mr. Locke, where he points out the mistake of the French translation of 2 John 7. the same as in our own ; and that it ought not to be as in our present translation ; *many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in flesh—but who confess not that Jesus who came in flesh, is the Christ* : and he observes, that in like manner, the rendering of 1 John iv. 2, 3. should be altered. *Locke's Works*, vol. iv. p. 425. Bishop of Carlisle's edition.

There is a difficulty in coming at the exact meaning of these first innovators and corrupters of the true doctrine of the scriptures concerning Christ. We find that they separated the Christ from Jesus, because they would not have it supposed that the Christ was a man, which Jesus confessedly was. They seem to have thought that the Christ was an emanation of the Deity, the first begotten of the Father, who descended upon



especially the distress and pain he underwent, before and at the time of his death, as most grievous to him, and appointed by God, as for other ends, so particularly for the trial of his obedience: and his patience, fortitude, and resignation under them, are mentioned as the things for which he was worthily exalted to honour by the supreme Father; and are continually held forth as an example and encouragement to his followers under their trials. As these great ends of the gospel were wholly defeated by the groundless conceit of these men concerning Christ, we cannot wonder to see the disciple whom Jesus shewed an especial affection for, and who could not but be well acquainted with him, in his letter upon this subject, striking abruptly,  
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upon Jesus at his baptism, when he wrought miracles, and declared the will of the unknown Father; and which afterwards continued to be united in Jesus, but no farther than was necessary for the discharge of his great office; and that when his ministry was finished, the Christ being spiritual, and incapable of suffering, left him, and Jesus was taken, and put to death on the cross, and raised again to life. See Beaufobre, *Hist. de Manich.* p. 28.—and his notes on the epistle of St. John; and Lardner's *Hist. of Heretics*, in Basilides, Cerinthus, and Marcion; a curious, valuable work, *unic* in our language.

(a) all at once as it were into it, in the very beginning; and maintaining by a variety of strong expression and argument, that he had the most absolute undeniable evidence, and conviction, that his Divine Master, the great Teacher of eternal life from God, was really a man. He afterwards takes up the subject again and again, in the course of this his first epistle, and also in the second; and through the whole shews himself exceedingly hurt and disturbed, that he should live to see any so obstinate and shameless as to call it in question.

*Eusebes.* I should be glad to be informed, Artemon, if there be any collateral testimony of ancient authors, to corroborate this account which you give of St. John's design in writing these epistles; and which shews that these first christians are justly chargeable with so gross an error concerning Christ, as you here impute to them?

*Artemon.* There is scarcely any point in so remote antiquity, of which we are better assured.

Ignatius,

*(a) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard, &c,*  
1 John i. 1, 2, 3.

Ignatius, Irenæus, Jerom, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Augustin, speak of it very particularly, and condemn it. And the learned moderns, who have been most conversant in these matters, take notice of it; Petavius, Cotelierius, Le Clerc, Tillotson, Beausobre, Lardner. Indeed it cannot be justly doubted, or denied. And whatever other antichrist there may be in the world, the chief antichristian (*a*) error of those early times, and that which is stigmatized as such by our apostle, was, *the denying Christ to have been really a man, subject to infirmities, suffering, and death.*

*Eusebes.* What, I pray, was the farther progress of this corruption of the true doctrine concerning Christ?

*Artemon.* Such an immediate, open, and direct confutation and condemnation of it, by an apostle of Christ, seems to have given such a check to it, that it died away of itself in the course of a few years; and we hear no more of any that were so absurd as to maintain it. But the seeds of it, alas! still remained, and produced the most lasting and fatal corruption of the true doctrine of the scriptures concerning Christ, which continues wide spread to this day. For these learned heathen converts to christianity,

(*a*) *Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not, that Jesus, who came in flesh, is the Christ. This is a deceiver, and an ANTICHRIST. 2 John 7.*

christianity, were still ashamed of the cross of Christ; and not content with such a Saviour as the scriptures held forth to them. And therefore, as it was the doctrine of their schools, before they embraced the gospel, that there was one supreme God over all, and (a) a second God, an inferior spirit, made by him, and his under-agent, in creating

(a) Justin Martyr, in his second apology, (*Paris* ed. 1615. p. 92, 93.) asserts that "Moses and Plato and the christians, were all agreed about the creation of the world by the *word* of God." And in the same place he remarks, that "Plato received from Moses what he utters in his *Timæus*, concerning the Son of God, or the Power next to the Chief God;" as he there terms it. A little before, in the same work, he had said, p. 74. "The first power, next after God, the Father, and sovereign Lord of all, is the *word* and Son; but in what manner being made flesh, he became a man, I shall shew hereafter." How much better would it have been if this worthy man had abstained from blending Plato's philosophy with the gospel; and instead of maintaining that a mighty pre-existent Spirit, next to God, and the subordinate creator of all things, was born of the virgin Mary, in the state of an helpless infant; had contented himself with what was the obvious meaning of the scriptures on this head, viz. that by the holy Spirit, or miraculous power of God, Christ was produced and born of Mary, a virgin, out of the ordinary course of generation, as Adam was first created by the same power.



ing the world; they took it for granted, from some expressions of the gospel ill understood, particularly in the entrance of St. John's gospel, that Christ was the second God of their philosophy, who took flesh of the virgin Mary, and became a man. And from this they went on to assert; that it was he that made the world, (a) who appeared to the patriarchs, and to Moses, and who was the ostensible and acting God and governor of the nation of Israel; whilst the supreme God lived retired, and was always invisible. This was the capital mistake which that good man, and ingenious writer, Justin Martin fell into; who embraced christianity about twelve years after the death of the apostle John. Though a native of Palestine he was very ignorant of the hebrew language; and nevertheless presumed to put his own sense upon the hebrew scriptures, and that intirely different from what any jew before had ever espoused, and to which Christ and his apostles appear to have been utter strangers. Unhappily, having been bred a philosopher, and enveloped in heathen darkness, he could not shake off his former opinions and prejudices, but grafted them upon his new religion, and has misled many wiser and more able men than himself,

(a) This most strange doctrine of Christ being the agent Deity of the Old World, is considered at large, in ch. vi. of "A Sequel to the Apology on resigning  
" the Vicarage of Catterick."

himself, in all ages to the present. But this error concerning Christ did not stop here. These heathen converts to christianity, went on afterwards deviating more and more from the doctrine of the holy scriptures in this matter; till, at length, it came to be established at the council of Nice, in the year 325, under the sanction of imperial authority; (an authority however of no value in the things of religion) that Jesus Christ was *very God, of one substance with the Father*, and the person by whom all things were made.

### INQUIRY XV.

*Why such early and lasting corruptions of the gospel have been permitted.*

*Eusebes.* EXCUSE me, I beg, if I detain you one moment longer. These corruptions of our holy religion, of which you have been speaking, with others of the like sort, are thought by many to bear hard against it, as if a system so imperfect, so soon abused, and so inadequate to the reformation of mankind, could not come from God. You will do me a singular kindness by favouring me with your sentiments on this intricate point.

*Artemon.* Depend upon it, Eusebes, these are objections that spring only from our ignorance. We do not enough consider how lately we were brought into being, and what unfinished creatures

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we are, to whom this divine revelation is made; and we pronounce too hastily concerning the designs of God in it, all which may be answered, and be most worthy of him, though far short of our expectations. All that can rightly be called the gospel of Christ, the way to eternal life, is a plain intelligible doctrine. Yet at first, and in all times since, having been delivered to and received by men with a thousand wrong habits and ways of thinking on divine subjects rivetted in them, these would unavoidably mix themselves with their new religion, and deprave it more or less, without some extraordinary interposition to prevent it, and to give a new cast to their minds; which did not take place, nor were there any grounds to expect it. Some also would be found, who out of interested, and other unworthy motives, would fet themselves to lower and debase the purity of this heavenly institution. Here then were some very natural impediments in its way, which were likely to obstruct its progress and good effects. And it is a satisfaction to observe, that these offences and obstacles to the truth, were foretold in the christian scriptures in a very particular manner, and the faithful servants of God forewarned and instructed what part they were to act in such seasons of prevailing degeneracy and corruption. So that as you are fully convinced, as every fair unprejudiced inquirer will be, that Jesus was a Teacher, (John iii. 2.) *come from God,* that

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that is, who spoke and acted by a divine authority ; and that we have his message and instructions to men, faithfully recorded and preserved : You need not be disturbed about their fate and reception in the world. It is the cause of God, and he will see to it.

But we cannot be contented with God's way, and methods with us, and to wait his time. We are for having perfection immediately to be bestowed upon ourselves : happiness without mixture of pain ; knowledge without error. And some will presume to blame, that so much perplexity, pain, and evil is admitted into his works, as if they had more compassion and goodness than the kind Creator and Father of all. But we should remember, that this life is but the beginning of our existence ; and that our Maker's benevolent plan and purpose for us reaches through all time ; is not merely to confer present happiness, although this abounds amongst mankind ; but that which is to last for ever. And if the avenue that leads to it, be at times dark and uncomfortable, we may not doubt but that it was so contrived with the kindest design, because Infinite Wisdom saw that it would tend to our greater virtuous improvement, and final felicity. His watchful providence we see continually at work, and producing an increase and overflow of good from those very corruptions of true religion, of which you complain. For the perversion  
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sion and abuse of the Scriptures has excited enquiry, and the study of those invaluable writings : which otherwise might have been wholly neglected ; and we in these latter ages might have been deprived of many advantages for the better understanding and defence of them, which we now enjoy. A conviction also of the weakness, ignorance, and fallibility of our nature, which always cleaves to us in the midst of our researches into the word and will of God, makes us more forbearing and equitable towards those that dissent from us, and tends to beget in us a spirit of just humility and teachableness ; which are qualities and dispositions of much more consequence to our future happiness and progressive improvements, than the most accurate extensive knowledge which we could lay in here. And perhaps that prevailing love, preference, and regard for God, for truth and righteousness above all other things, by which alone we can be fixed in complete and permanent happiness, could only be generated in us, by the obstacles, difficulties, temptations, and sufferings, which we have to encounter with, and to overcome in our way to attain it, in this our probationary state. That sympathy and benevolent concern for the virtuous attainments and final happiness of our fellow-creatures, which will likewise make one of the chief ingredients of our own bliss in the heavenly state, could not, it may be, have been so effectually produced

duced in us, if we had not been so connected together, and dependent on each other here for our future, as well as present welfare. But this divine constitution of things under which we are placed, where it is not seriously attended to, becomes the source of great errors and much evil. If you take no pains to instruct those who belong to, and depend upon you, they must want the means of virtuous improvement here, and suffer hereafter by your neglect. And if you now, Eusebes, who declare yourself to be convinced that there is but one God and Father of all, should go on to acknowledge and worship other persons as Gods, Jesus, and the holy Spirit; your better knowledge is given you in vain. Others are not benefited by it, as they ought to be. You mislead those who are made to look up to you for guidance and instruction: for which you will be accountable.

I thank you, Artemon, for the friendly hint in your conclusion. I shall endeavour to profit by it. But I must crave your kind assistance at some future opportunity, to state and consider this matter of religious worship at full length. For some, you know, who do not allow Jesus Christ to be God; who hold him only to be a man invested with extraordinary divine powers, do yet contend that he ought to be invoked in prayer, and worshiped. And I would willingly have no doubts upon a point of such moment left upon my mind.

THE END.



